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NO. III

AUTUMN · 1972

The Southern Review

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THE
Southern Review

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Notes on Contributors

THERESA K. ANDRÉ, primarily interested in creative writing and working with the arts in recording and film, has published poems in the *Mediterranean Review* and *Gulfstream*. A native of New Roads, Louisiana, she teaches in the English Department at Louisiana State University.

D. C. BERRY'S volume of poetry, entitled *Saigon Cemetery*, has been published by the University of Georgia Press. His poetry has appeared in numerous little magazines and academic journals. He is teaching at the Center for Writers at the University of Southern Mississippi.

M. E. BRADFORD has two works in progress—a series of papers on millennialist rhetoric in America and a book of essays on Southwestern letters to be titled *Old Times Not Forgotten*. Among his published works is *Rumors of Mortality: An Introduction to Allen Tate*. He is chairman of the Department of English at the University of Dallas.

BESMILR BRIGHAM, a native of the Mississippi Delta, is a freelancer who makes her home in Horatio, Arkansas. A volume of her poems, *Heaved from the Earth*, was published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1971. She is working on a new collection of poems and compiling a book of short stories, the latter based on her extensive experience in Mexico. Recipient of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1970, her work has appeared in many magazines and in several anthologies, including the *Borestone Mountain Poetry Awards*. This fall she is giving readings at nine American universities.

VAN K. BROCK is in the English Department at Florida State University. He has published poetry in leading literary magazines and has had his work anthologized in the *Borestone Mountain Poetry Awards*.

He is coordinator and administrator of a pilot project for the Poetry-in-the-Schools program in the Tallahassee Area, Florida Division of Cultural Affairs.

PANTHEA REID BROUGHTON has published essays in the *Mississippi Quarterly* and in the *Southern Humanities Review*. A member of the English faculty at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, she is working on a full-length study of Faulkner's fiction.

CHARLES T. BUNTING is associate professor of English at Norfolk State College in Virginia, where he teaches Contemporary Literature and Victorian Literature. He is compiling a series of interviews with contemporary writers for future publication in book form.

GEORGE CORE, currently on leave from his position as editor of the University of Georgia Press, is engaged in a study of Anglo-American literary relations. He holds a fellowship awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

LEWIS DABNEY, on the English faculty at Vassar, has completed a study of Faulkner's tales of the Mississippi entitled *The Indians of Yoknapatawpha*, part of which appeared in the spring issue of the *Columbia Forum*. He has also written essays on Edmund Wilson and is working on a book of Wilson's criticism. He hopes to do more writing on Faulkner.

ROBERT DUPREE has published articles on modern, medieval, and Renaissance literature and is completing a book on Menippean satire. He is director of the program in literary criticism at the Institute of Philosophical Studies, University of Dallas.

JOHN TYREE FAIN, professor of English at the University of Florida, was an undergraduate at Vanderbilt from 1922 to 1926 during the years when *The Fugitive* was published. Some of the older Fugitives were his teachers (Ransom, Davidson, Johnson) and some of the younger members of the group were his classmates (Warren, Moore, Lytle).

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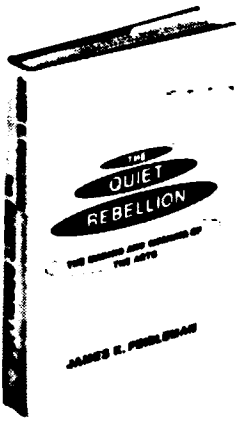

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With Thomas Daniel Young, he is coeditor of *The Literary Correspondence of Allen Tate and Donald Davidson*, which is excerpted in this issue of the *Review* and forthcoming in 1973 from the University of Georgia Press. This volume is conceived as the first of several volumes of Fugitive correspondence.

JIM FAULKNER is in the process of writing a book about his family's part in the settlement of North Mississippi. A nephew of William Faulkner, he is a former Marine pilot now living in Lafayette County with his wife and three children.

ANDREW LYTLE, editor of the *Sewanee Review* and professor of English at the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee, is the author of four novels: *The Long Night*, *At the Moon's Inn*, *A Name for Evil*, and *The Velvet Horn*. He has twice been awarded Guggenheim Fellowships and has held the *Kenyon Review* fellowship for fiction. In 1965 he was accorded the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters by Kenyon College and in 1970 was given the same honor by the University of Florida.

FRANK MANLEY is professor of English at Emory University. Editor of three volumes on the Renaissance period, his articles on Renaissance literature have appeared in several learned journals. He has held a More Fellowship at Yale and in 1966-1967 held a Guggenheim Fellowship. His avocation is Southeastern archaeology and he spends as much time as possible in the mountains of North Georgia.

KAY McCLELLAND is a graduate student and Danforth Fellow in the American Studies Department at Yale. A 1971 graduate in the Honors Division, Louisiana State University, her first published story in this issue of the *Review* is an outgrowth of her undergraduate work in creative writing.

JAMES B. MERIWETHER is McClintock Professor of Southern Literature at the University of South Carolina. He is the author of *The*

DISSERTATION ESSAY COMPETITION

The Publisher of *The Review of Metaphysics*, The Philosophy Education Society, Inc., announces the annual essay competition. The competition is open to participants who have been awarded the Ph.D. degree in Philosophy in the United States or Canada during 1972. Essays must be a chapter from a dissertation, or a paper based directly upon the dissertation. Essays on any topic dealt with in the dissertation are acceptable. Essays submitted should not exceed twenty-five typewritten pages (double-spaced) and should be accompanied with a return postage envelope. The author of the prize-winning essay will receive $100 and it is expected that the essay will be published in *The Review of Metaphysics*. The best essay will be selected by the following committee: John J. Compton, Vanderbilt University; Donald Davidson, The Rockefeller University; Gerald J. Massey, University of Pittsburgh; and Jude P. Dougherty, the editor of *The Review of Metaphysics*, The Catholic University of America. Essays must bear a postmark no later than January 15, 1973 and should be sent to *The Review of Metaphysics*, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C. 20017. Essays should be marked as submissions for the competition. The winning essay will be announced by April 1, 1973. Additional inquiries concerning the competition may be directed to the above address.

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RONALD MORAN is assistant dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of North Carolina and a member of the English faculty. His most recent published book is a study of the poems of Louis Simpson. His poetry has appeared in the *Arlington Quarterly*, the *North American Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *The Southern Review*, and other journals. He held a Fulbright Lectureship to Germany during 1969-70.

ANDREW H. PFEIFFER, a graduate student in history at Vanderbilt, is the author of an article on Faulkner to be published in *Notes on Mississippi Writers*. When he completes his work for a Ph.D. with a dissertation on Faulkner, he hopes to teach in an American studies program.

REYNOLDS PRICE's *A Long and Happy Life*, published by Atheneum in 1962, has been reprinted and translated into several languages, as have *The Names and Faces of Heroes*, *A Generous Man*, and *Love and Work*. His poetry has appeared in numerous literary magazines. He is in the English Department at Duke University.

LEON ROOKE is visiting lecturer in the Writing Program at the University of Victoria. His book of short stories entitled *Last One Home Sleeps in the Yellow Bed* was published by the Louisiana State University Press. His work has been published in literary quarterlies and he is now busy on a play, *Ms. America*, a novel, *The Man Who Made Time*, and a story collection, *Holding Patterns*.

TED R. SPIVEY has published various articles on modern English and American literature. Author of *The Renewed Quest* and *The Coming of the New Man*, he has in progress a study of myth and modern fiction entitled *The Journey Beyond Tragedy*. He is on the English faculty at Georgia State University.

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GULFSTREAM, a new tri-quarterly literary magazine from the Deep South, announces an all student issue slated for publication in the late fall. This will follow the current issue of GULFSTREAM which includes poetry by Stanley Plumly, Richard Hugo, William Hathaway, James Welch, and Geof Hewitt.

The second issue of GULFSTREAM is a showcase of the best student writing from college workshops around the country. The editors encourage submissions of poetry, short fiction, and drama from students of writing on the undergraduate and graduate levels. Also in this issue are interviews with *Marvin Bell*, head of the poetry writing program at the University of Iowa, and *David Madden*, award-winning novelist and writer-in-residence at Louisiana State University.

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THOMAS DANIEL YOUNG, Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of English at Vanderbilt University, is working on a biography of John Crowe Ransom. His edition, *John Crowe Ransom: Critical Essays and a Bibliography*, was published by the Louisiana State University Press in 1968.

Writing in the South No. III

(Some Prefatory Notes on Garnishing and Peopling a Void)

The third special number of *The Southern Review* devoted to writing in the South reminds us, perhaps more forcefully than the first two numbers, of the richness of the literary imagination that brought into being the twentieth-century Southern Renaissance. The unpublished

introduction by William Faulkner to *The Sound and the Fury*—presented in our pages through the dedicated efforts of James B. Meriwether and the great courtesy of Mrs. Jill Faulkner Summers—is unquestionably not less than a central testimony to the power of this imagination. No less convincing affirmation of this power is offered by the remarkable letters of Allen Tate and Donald Davidson in the period immediately preceding the publication of *I'll Take My Stand*, by the fine perceptions of Eudora Welty in Charles T. Bunting's conversation about her art with this singularly gracious storyteller, and by the distinguished evocation of a vanished Southern world in the excerpt from Andrew Lytle's *A Wake for the Living*.

Employing a touch of Jamesian subtlety, we might well, I think, affix as an ironic epigraph to this Fall, 1972, number of the *Review* one of the several exclamations that erupt so vividly from the mind of "the repatriated absentee" and "restless analyst" in the course of the intricately involuted impressions which make up Henry James's great prose poem, *The American Scene*: "What on earth—nurse of a rich heroic past, nurse of a fierce avenging future, nurse of any connection that would make for *any* brood of visions about one's knee—wouldn't one have to become . . . if one had this great melancholy void to garnish and to people!" The thought came to James when, in his role as observer of the Southern part of the American scene, he stood meditating in the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond. It was the winter of 1905, and snow was falling on the former capital of the Confederate States of America, giving the city an aspect of desolation he had failed to expect in the Southern clime. But in the Museum he encountered a desolation greater than that of a wintry day, and to describe it his sensibility sought a more graphic image. Surveying the whole scene in the Museum—the "old Confederate documents, already sallow with time, framed letters, orders, autographs, extracts, tatters of a paper-currency" —James found it to be "as sad throughout, as some raw spring eventide." He had strikingly reversed the usual association with the spring season before (as in *The Beast in the Jungle*), using the image of the early spring evening to convey the notion not only of a spiritual expectation unfilled but of one that cannot be fulfilled—to suggest the idea of the spirit standing in the presence of its need but through some in-

capacity of perception incapable even of formulating the nature of the want. In the Confederate Museum, James believed, he had discovered the cultural situation of the post-bellum South. It consisted essentially in a great disproportion between the magnitude of the "social revolution" that had occurred in the South as the result of its defeat in the Civil War and the quality of the response of the Southern imagination to this cataclysm. Indeed, the "sorry objects" in the Museum of the aborted Southern dream of nationhood indicated a response "so low" in "the aesthetic level" that "it was impossible, from room to room, to imagine a community, of equal size, more disinherited of art or of letters." As the reader of James will recognize, he recurs to a description of the deprived state of American aspirants to art in "The Madonna of the Future." But in this early story the emphasis is different. It is on the want—under the general condition of American innocence of the European experience—of a "nursing air, of a kindly soil, of opportunity, of the things that help." Moreover, a remedy for this lack is given to American aspirants: "Invent, create, achieve." The limitations of innocence, in other words, can be overcome by the determination to gain the experience of literature and art. Jeffrey Aspern in *The Aspern Papers* came out of an America in which "literature was lonely . . . and art and form almost impossible," but he developed the capacity "to feel, understand and express everything." Had he been a Southerner—especially one of the Age of the Confederacy and following—Aspern would scarcely, according to the Jamesian analysis of the South in *The American Scene*, have had any potentiality of development. In the South the disinheritance of art was not conditional, it was absolute. For the South had made the disinheritance the condition of its mind. In its perverse insistence on becoming a great "Slave State," it had fulfilled, to be sure, the ultimate logic of American innocence: defying altogether "the light of experience . . . and every finger-post of history, of political and spiritual science with which the scene of civilization seemed to bristle," the South had cut itself off from "the reality of things"—namely, the progressive amelioration of society through "the plan of Christendom and the wisdom of the ages." It had done this with the utmost intention, establishing "a new criticism"—a new theory of culture—which in effect put "all literature and art on an expurgatory index." The lone-

liness of literature, the impossibility of art and form in America, had attained, one might say, a consummate state in the South. What indeed would the Southern writer have to become to nurse such a void, to garnish it and to people it with the art of the literary mind? With the imagination of the poet, the storyteller, the critic? James would seem to have written off the prospect of any Southern revival of letters, and certainly that of a brilliant flowering, and at any future time. Obviously he had not the slightest intimation that such a flowering might occur within twenty-five years of his visit to the South.

And yet James's impression of the Southern situation in art and literature is paradoxically, we may discern, an anticipation of the Southern Renaissance. However oversimplified (or over complicated) it may be, James's is the most intense and dramatic response to the South at the beginning of the twentieth century—to its intellectual, literary, artistic, that is to say, to its overall spiritual prospects and possibilities—that we have. The true import of the sixty-odd pages on the South in *The American Scene* emerges when we realize how much this commentary springs from James's own deep need to believe in "the reality of things"—in the reality of the progressive expansion of civility in the world, attended by the steady vanquishment of barbarism. James's faith in civilization was always precarious; the intuition of the darkness in man was strong in his consciousness of history, so much so that it appears today that his true subject was not the modern inheritance of civilization but its disinheritance. Near the end of his life—in August, 1914—James came close to realizing this himself. All of his long-held faith in the civilizing process was suddenly revealed to be false by the coming of the First World War. All of the time the treacherous, deceptive years had been making for this catastrophe, when it had appeared that at the least the worst things were becoming impossible. The war "seems to me," he said, "to *undo* everything . . . in the most horrible retroactive way."

In thus experiencing explicitly such a reversal of the dominant version of reality in his age, James was confirming what he had increasingly experienced implicitly. Looking back at James's struggle to fathom the meaning of the Southern mind as he came up against the enigma of this state of consciousness in 1905, we are led to think that the inten-

sity of his effort resulted from a sympathy with the South that, because of his conviction of the pure evil of slavery, he could not expressly feel. In spite of his harsh strictures on the South, James could experience an "ingenuity of tenderness" for Southerners. In *The American Scene* he seems to feel, if not to think, that the Old South had been undone by the ironic and complex treachery of the Age of Progress. He approaches, if at some distance, a vision of the Confederate South as a reaction against modern history; as a unique and extreme attempt to defeat history as the imperative of progress; as a singularly innocent participant in a drama—at once absurd, heroic, comic, tragic—of a reversal of reality (that is to say, of the version of reality shaped by the doctrine of Progress). Following the First World War this drama became clearly the leading modern literary subject. I mean the drama of the discovery of the shocking inadequacy of the progress of civilization as a concept of reality. When Southern writers recognized the long, intimate, involved participation of their particular world in this drama, they came into an imaginative awareness of the meaning of the relics in the Southern museum. They have elaborately garnished and abundantly peopled this void that is their inheritance.

—Lewis P. Simpson

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WILLIAM FAULKNER

An Introduction for The Sound and the Fury

EDITED BY JAMES B. MERIWETHER

FOR A NEW edition of *The Sound and the Fury* which was announced in 1933 but was never published, William Faulkner wrote an introduction that for years was supposed to have survived only in an incomplete four-page typescript which he preserved among his papers. The recent discovery of the missing first page makes possible the publication here, for the first time, of a Faulkner document of unique critical and biographical significance.

The existence of the piece has been known since 1957, though it has attracted little attention. In March of that year, when Faulkner deposited his own collection of his manuscripts in the Princeton University Library, and I undertook the task of sorting and making a list of them, I was not sure how to describe the piece, for the first page was missing, and with it whatever title (if any) Faulkner had given it. The remaining four pages (numbered 2, 3, and 4, with the last page unnumbered) dealt with the writing of Faulkner's first seven novels, especially *The Sound and the Fury*, and it obviously had been written sometime between October, 1932 (the publication of *Light in August*, Faulkner's seventh

novel), and the fall of 1934 (the date of the writing of *Pylon*, his eighth). In the Faulkner exhibition I prepared later in 1957 at the library, I quoted from the typescript simply as "an unpublished note on *The Sound and the Fury*."[1]

Further research established the virtual certainty that this was the introduction, or a draft of it, that Faulkner wrote for that abortive 1933 project, and I described it as such in the handlist of the Faulkner manuscripts which I published in 1961;[2] and the following year, in an article on *The Sound and the Fury*,[3] I discussed this edition, and what was known about the introduction, in some detail.[4] But it was not until a decade later that the missing first page turned up in a box of previously unknown Faulkner papers which was found in a closet at Rowanoak, his house in Oxford, Mississippi. Apparently Faulkner had forgotten about this box, for he gave no indication of the existence of any others when he discussed the manuscripts and typescripts at Princeton (now at the University of Virginia) with me on several occasions between 1957 and 1959.

The 1933 *Publishers' Trade List Annual* carried a "tentative advance announcement for the fall of 1933" by Random House, listing "A new limited Edition" of *The Sound and the Fury*. There were to be 500 copies, signed by Faulkner, who would also contribute "a new introduction," and it would be printed by the Grabhorn Press. The announcement was repeated the following year, for publication in fall, 1934, but the new edition never appeared—apparently a victim of the depression.

Late in June, 1933, Faulkner referred to the project in a letter he wrote to his agent, Ben Wasson, asking him, "Just what does he [Bennett Cerf of Random House] want in the introduction? I'm ready to start

[1] James B. Meriwether, *The Literary Career of William Faulkner* (Princeton, 1961), p. 16.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

[3] Meriwether, "Notes on the Textual History of *The Sound and the Fury*," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 56 (Third Quarter, 1962), pp. 285-316.

[4] I was tempted to include the piece in the volume of Faulkner's nonfiction prose that I edited in 1966, but decided against it in hopes that a complete text would turn up in time to be included in a second edition.

right away."[5] In another letter to Wasson, probably written no more than a few weeks later, Faulkner said, "The enclosed explains itself. I have worked on it a good deal, like on a poem almost, and I think that it is all right now. See what Bennet [*sic*] thinks and let me know."[6] It would seem all but certain, then, that Faulkner wrote the introduction and sent it in sometime during the late summer of 1933.[7]

When, early in 1946, Random House began making plans to reissue *The Sound and the Fury* in their Modern Library series, Faulkner was asked if he would write an introduction for it, but he turned the offer down. "I dont know how to write introductions," he told Malcolm Cowley in a letter soon afterward. "I dont recall ever seeing one, except the one I wrote for B Cerf about 10 years ago when he thought he would reprint TSAF and didn't or forgot it or whatever."[8] A little later, in another letter to Cowley, he reiterated his antipathy toward the project: "I cant write an introduction; I hope to hell Random House cant find the other one I did."[9]

It did turn up, however. On May 22, Robert Linscott, an editor at Random House, wrote Faulkner that the introduction had been found, and that he hoped Faulkner would approve its inclusion in the new Modern Library volume. Apparently, Linscott sent the introduction back to Faulkner along with his letter; and obviously Faulkner did not approve its publication, for the book appeared the following December without it. And no trace of the piece could be found in the Random House files in 1964, when plans were being made for a new edition of *The Sound and the Fury*.[10] If, as seems probable, Linscott returned to

[5] The original of this letter is in the Faulkner Collection of the Alderman Library, University of Virginia. It was published in 1968 as a keepsake by the Gleeson Library Associates of the University of San Francisco.

[6] Quoted from the original, in the Alderman Library, by kind permission of Mrs. Jill Faulkner Summers.

[7] What appears to be an early typescript draft of the piece, which also turned up among the papers at Rowanoak, was dated by Faulkner "Oxford./19 August, 1933."

[8] Malcolm Cowley, ed. *The Faulkner-Cowley File* (New York, 1966), p. 84. Cowley dates the letter February 1, 1946. Faulkner was being somewhat disingenuous; only a year and a half before writing that introduction to *The Sound and the Fury*, he had written an introduction for the Modern Library *Sanctuary*.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

[10] I had undertaken to prepare the text for this new edition of the novel, but the project fell through. While it was still underway, however, Albert Erskine, who had edited Faulkner's last two books for Random House, had an intensive search made of the

Faulkner the copy of the introduction that was found in 1946, Faulkner may have lost or destroyed it; or, if the version published here is, in fact, the one which was submitted to Random House and returned to him in 1946, the first page must have been separated from the rest of the piece when it was placed in his files again.

Though it is impossible to be sure how well Faulkner remembered the piece in 1946, his reluctance to have it published then for the first time should not be taken, now, as his final judgment upon it. The 1933 introduction is a unique revelation of its author. Almost as if he were making amends for the deceptively hardboiled tone he had adopted in the 1932 *Sanctuary* introduction, Faulkner permitted himself, when writing to introduce *The Sound and the Fury*, to say things that, so far as I know, he had never said before, and would not say again, in public. Though all its "facts" are not to be taken literally—for example, *Sartoris* was accepted one year after its first rejection, not three—there is no question about the essential truth of the piece. In later years, on many occasions, Faulkner made it clear that *The Sound and the Fury* was the closest to his heart of all his works; but it is in this introduction that he comes nearest to saying why.

I wrote this book and learned to read. I had learned a little about writing from Soldiers' Pay—how to approach language, words: not with seriousness so much, as an essayist does, but with a kind of alert respect, as you approach dynamite; even with joy, as you approach women: perhaps with the same secretly unscrupulous intentions. But when I finished The Sound and The Fury I discovered that there is actually something to which the shabby term Art not only can, but must, be applied. I discovered then that I had gone through all that I had ever read, from Henry James through Henty to newspaper murders, without making any distinction or digesting any of it, as a moth or a goat might. After The Sound and The Fury and without heeding to open another book and in a series of delayed repercussions like summer thunder, I discovered the Flauberts and Dostoievskys and Conrads whose books I had read ten years ago. With The Sound and The Fury I learned to read and quit reading, since I have read nothing since.

Random House files, but with no result—except the discovery of the carbon of the Linscott letter, a copy of which he kindly sent me in March, 1964.

Nor do I seem to have learned anything since. While writing Sanctuary, the next novel to The Sound and The Fury, that part of me which learned as I wrote, which perhaps is the very force which drives a writer to the travail of invention and the drudgery of putting seventy-five or a hundred thousand words on paper, was absent because I was still reading by repercussion the books which I had swallowed whole ten years and more ago. I learned only from the writing of Sanctuary that there was something missing; something which The Sound and The Fury gave me and Sanctuary did not. When I began As I Lay Dying I had discovered what it was and knew that it would be also missing in this case because this would be a deliberate book. I set out deliberately to write a tour-de-force. Before I ever put pen to paper and set down the first word, I knew what the last word would be and almost where the last period would fall. Before I began I said, I am going to write a book by which, at a pinch, I can stand or fall if I never touch ink again. So when I finished it the cold satisfaction was there, as I had expected, but as I had also expected that other quality which The Sound and The Fury had given me was absent: that emotion definite and physical and yet nebulous to describe: that ecstasy, that eager and joyous faith and anticipation of surprise which the yet unmarred sheet beneath my hand held inviolate and unfailing, waiting for release. It was not there in As I Lay Dying. I said, It is because I knew too much about this book before I began to write it. I said, More than likely I shall never again have to know this much about a book before I begin to write it, and next time it will return. I waited almost two years, then I began Light in August, knowing no more about it than a young woman, pregnant, walking along a strange country road. I thought, I will recapture it now, since I know no more about this book than I did about The Sound and The Fury when I sat down before the first blank page.

It did not return. The written pages grew in number. The story was going pretty well: I would sit down to it each morning without reluctance yet still without that anticipation and that joy which alone ever made writing pleasure to me. The book was almost finished before I acquiesced to the fact that it would not recur, since I was now aware before each word was written down just what the people would do, since now I was deliberately choosing among possibilities and probabilities of behavior and weighing and measuring each choice by the scale of the Jameses and Conrads and Balzacs. I knew that I had read too much, that I had reached that stage which all young writers must pass through, in which he believes that he has learned too much about his trade. I received

a copy of the printed book and I found that I didn't even want to see what kind of jacket Smith had put on it. I seemed to have a vision of it and the other ones subsequent to The Sound and The Fury ranked in order upon a shelf while I looked at the titled backs of them with a flagging attention which was almost distaste, and upon which each succeeding title registered less and less, until at last Attention itself seemed to say, Thank God I shall never need to open any one of them again. I believed that I knew then why I had not recaptured that first ecstasy, and that I should never again recapture it; that whatever novels I should write in the future would be written without reluctance, but also without anticipation or joy: that in the Sound and The Fury I had already put perhaps the only thing in literature which would ever move me very much: Caddy climbing the pear tree to look in the window at her grandmother's funeral while Quentin and Jason and Benjy and the negroes looked up at the muddy seat of her drawers.

This is the only one of the seven novels which I wrote without any accompanying feeling of drive or effort, or any following feeling of exhaustion or relief or distaste. When I began it I had no plan at all. I wasn't even writing a book. I was thinking of books, publication, only in the reverse, in saying to myself, I wont have to worry about publishers liking or not liking this at all. Four years before I had written Soldiers' Pay. It didn't take long to write and it got published quickly and made me about five hundred dollars. I said, Writing novels is easy. You dont make much doing it, but it is easy. I wrote Mosquitoes. It wasn't quite so easy to write and it didn't get published quite as quickly and it made me about four hundred dollars. I said, Apparently there is more to writing novels, being a novelist, than I thought. I wrote Sartoris. It took much longer, and the publisher refused it at once. But I continued to shop it about for three years with a stubborn and fading hope, perhaps to justify the time which I had spent writing it. This hope died slowly, though it didn't hurt at all. One day I seemed to shut a door between me and all publishers' addresses and book lists. I said to myself, Now I can write. Now I can make myself a vase like that which the old Roman kept at his bedside and wore the rim slowly away with kissing it. So I, who had never had a sister and was fated to lose my daughter in infancy, set out to make myself a beautiful and tragic little girl.

Copyright © 1972 by the Estate of William Faulkner. As printed here, Faulkner's typescript has been reproduced exactly, except for the correction of five obvious typing errors: 708.27 withoyt] without ; 708.32 agao] ago ; 709.10 begn] began ; 709.19 give] given ; 710.11 withoyt] without

CHARLES T. BUNTING

"The Interior World": An Interview with Eudora Welty

Eudora Welty has long been recognized as one of America's most distinguished women of letters. The recipient of numerous academic and literary awards, Miss Welty makes her home in Jackson, Mississippi, where this interview took place on January 24, 1972. The preceding day Miss Welty reviewed most of the questions which were to be asked. The interviewer wishes to express his appreciation for the graciousness afforded him by Miss Welty both during the interview and in the prompt return and careful editing of the transcript of our conversation. No alterations have been made to that returned manuscript.

Eudora Welty's contributions to The Southern Review *(first series) include "A Memory" and "A Piece of News," which later appeared in her first collection of short stories,* A Curtain of Green. *The hard-cover edition of her latest novel,* The Optimist's Daughter, *was published last spring.*

C.T.B.: What is the story regarding Ford Madox Ford's efforts to find a publisher for your short stories?

MISS WELTY: Well, when I first began publishing in *The Southern Review* and other little magazines, I was still unable to get my work accepted in magazines of national circulation, like the *Atlantic* or *Harper's*, and, of course, no publisher wanted to take a book of short stories

by such an unknown writer. I'm sure it was Katherine Anne Porter who called my stories to his attention. As you may know, Ford spent vast energies all his life helping young people. I was one of them, probably the last of a long list. It was just a great, generous spirit he had. He wrote to me out of a blue sky and asked if he could help in any way in interesting a publisher. Would I send him some of my work, which I did. And I suppose he wrote me altogether about six letters. He tried the stories on most of the publishers in England, and they would send them back. He was in the process of sending my stories out at the time of his death. I never met him or anything. I wish I had. I owe him a great debt. Most of all, he gave me faith that people did care about beginning work, you know. A great person like him.

C.T.B.: Robert Penn Warren helped you, didn't he, especially by the publication of "A Piece of News" in *Understanding Fiction*?

MISS WELTY: Oh, before that. He helped me from the time he accepted my stories for *The Southern Review*. He and Cleanth Brooks and Albert Erskine all were down at *The Southern Review*, which was published by LSU, and it was to them I sent my earliest stories. And they *accepted* them! *Helped* me? Why, it just gave me, you know, my life to get my stories into print at that time, and they printed a number of them. They were marvelous to me.

C.T.B.: Have you helped any aspiring writers along yourself, say, in the past few years?

MISS WELTY: Not anything like that. I would like to do what I can. Now and then, when I was lecturing, I would run across, in reading manuscripts of students, things which were unmistakably good, and I would try to steer them to an editor or agent, something like that, but that was what anybody would have done. Mostly I think teachers are in a position to help young writers more than just another writer. They can say: *Read.*

C.T.B.: Where does a teacher steer these students? Don't you need an agent these days to get anything published?

MISS WELTY: Well, you're talking now about selling. I was talking about writing, about getting good work done.

C.T.B.: And published?

MISS WELTY: And in time published. In my case I got an agent after I'd been trying for about six years to place my stories in a national magazine. Diarmuid Russell wrote to me, again out of a clear blue sky, and asked if I needed an agent. He's the son of A. E., do you remember the poet, Yeats's friend? I'd never heard of an agent, didn't know what one was. But he had been given my name by an editor who came through Jackson on a scouting trip once: John Woodburn. And John Woodburn, who passed through here and spent the night in my house, took a whole bundle of my stories back to New York. He worked for Doubleday, who weren't particularly interested in the new, young short story writer. John, though, was a wonderful editor, the same kind as Max Perkins; he cared about work for its own sake. And he struggled very hard to sell the stories, but failed. Well, then he put me on to Diarmuid Russell, who succeeded finally in placing my stories in the *Atlantic* and *Harper's Bazaar* and *Harper's*. After which the publishers, the book publishers, were interested. So in the end he sold my book of stories to John Woodburn at Doubleday, so it was a perfect connected little story. And that's how it happened. But this isn't to forget that from the first I'd had instant acceptance from people like *The Southern Review* and the "little" magazines. I had encouragement important to me. That's what mattered, more than good fortune. Of course, as far as making a living out of writing goes, you can't. You always have to do something else, have a job or do assignments or teach or lecture or something. As far as making a living goes, writing stories is very precarious.

C.T.B.: While reading the article by Diarmuid Russell which you gave me (cf. *Shenandoah*, Winter, 1969), it surprised me to learn that the first publication of *A Curtain of Green* sold less than three thousand copies. It was later sold to Harcourt, Brace, wasn't it?

MISS WELTY: Yes, I moved to them when John Woodburn moved. I stayed with him because it was to him I owed my gratitude, before the publisher. I've forgotten what sort of sales happened after it moved to Harcourt; I mean to *A Curtain of Green*. *Low* would be the usual thing.

C.T.B.: I believe it sold a little less than than seven thousand copies, according to the article.

MISS WELTY: That book, of course, is included intact in this thing called *Selected Stories* [a reference to the Modern Library edition], which isn't really selected; it's just my first two books. I wish it could be selected. But they just buy plates of the books, and it has to be as is. And I suppose that's the one that stays in print. Well, I guess the Harcourt one is supposed to be in print.

C.T.B.: I think when *Delta Wedding* was published, then some of the other books were republished, weren't they? I believe they were out of print for awhile.

MISS WELTY: No, I don't think they've ever been out of print. But now, the one I'm sorry about is *The Golden Apples*, which in a way is closest to my heart of all my books. Harcourt only issues it now as a paperback, but I am sorry about that because I like the book. And it was a beautiful hard-cover edition, just a lovely book; I mean, the job of bookmaking. It had a beautiful jacket. Everything about it I liked.

C.T.B.: You're fond of the work itself?

MISS WELTY: Yes, I am. I was very happy working with that.

C.T.B.: Because of your use of folklore and myth?

MISS WELTY: Well, in a peripheral way, it was that. That was one of the elements that went into it, but I mostly loved working on the connected stories, finding the way things emerged in my mind and the way one thing led to another; the interconnections of the book fascinated me.

C.T.B.: How long did it take you to write that work?

MISS WELTY: Well, I don't know. Because I didn't begin it as a book of connected stories. I only realized the stories were connected after I was about halfway through the book. Some of the people I invented turned out to be not new characters but the same ones come upon at other times in their lives. Quite suddenly I realized I was writing about the same people. All their interconnections came to light. That's what I mean by the fascinations of fiction: things that go on in the back of your mind, that gradually emerge. And you say, "Well, of course; that's what it was all the time." It's not simple at all, of course, the working out of fiction in the mind. It's terribly complicated and not too well understood, I suppose.

C.T.B.: You mentioned yesterday that even your novels began as short stories, and that was true of *The Golden Apples* too, I guess.

MISS WELTY: In *The Golden Apples* they exist on their own as short stories; they have independent lives. They don't have to be connected, but I think by being connected there's something additional coming from them as a group with a meaning of its own. I've had students write to me and say, "I'm writing a thesis to prove that *The Golden Apples* is a novel. Please send me. . . ." They want me to support them. So I write back and say that it isn't a novel, I'm sorry. They go right ahead, of course. It doesn't matter with a thesis, I guess.

C.T.B.: Do they get angry with you?

MISS WELTY: I don't know what they get. (Laughing) And I'm sure they don't care what I get.

C.T.B.: When a school asks you to teach, do they assume that you will teach creative writing?

MISS WELTY: *I* asked *them* for my only teaching job, at Millsaps. And they were marvelous about it. They found me the class; they gave me the time; I had a handpicked group of about seventeen very exciting young people, talented and good. We met once a week, sometimes twice a week, and I gave public readings and lectures on the side. I told them at the beginning I didn't believe in teaching writing. I don't think you can. It's something you have to learn for yourself. But I do think that it's helpful, perhaps—I was never in a writing class—that it may be helpful to write stories and read them aloud in class and then talk about them. And then have on hand certain stories written by real artists that we could read and talk about. So that's what we did. It was really a work class. Some people wrote three or four stories a year, and some wrote a dozen, just whatever they felt able to do. People have different capacities and different paces. I don't know what you think of that as a class, but . . . .

C.T.B.: I think that having students actually write is the best way to teach such a course. Do you think that would-be writers should have a course in literary analysis? Does that help, or is that working in the opposite way?

MISS WELTY: I wouldn't know because that isn't the way my mind

works at all. Because writing is an internal process. You can't be helped from outside. It's interesting to see what people have done with analysis, but I don't think it helps you any while you're working because the craft of writing, which is constructive, moves in the opposite direction from the analysis of it. You don't start by saying, "These ingredients are to go in my novel: A, B, C, 1, 2, 3," and so on. It has to start from an internal feeling of your own and an experience of your own, and I think each reality like that has to find and build its own form. Another person's form doesn't really help. It shows what they've found, but that doesn't, may not, even apply. I know it doesn't help in the act of writing because you're not thinking of anything then but your story. You're not thinking, "How did Joyce do this?" That's fatal. It's all-absorbing, as it is, to bring about your own; your work needs all the sense you can master, and all the feeling, everything of yourself you can put into it. I don't mean self-conscious self. You don't think about your self either; you think about the work. To think "I, so-and-so, am writing this story" would just be fatal, more fatal than anything.

C.T.B.: Your fiction has frequently been praised for its lyrical quality. Did you aspire to be a poet when you first began to write? There were some poems of yours published in *Southern Humanities Review*.

MISS WELTY: No, I can't write poetry at all. Of course, as a child of ten or twelve, like anyone, I would write jingles and stuff. *Southern Humanities Review* should have left them buried in the children's pages of *St. Nicholas Magazine*. But I know I have no connection with poetry. Of course, I'm pleased if a lyrical quality is felt in my stories because it does lie in my nature to praise and to celebrate things, but I try not to be "poetic." I think I'm trying to just write good prose, you know, explicit prose.

C.T.B.: What essential differences of technique and difficulty do you experience between writing short stories and a novel?

MISS WELTY: Well, a short story to me, and I think to most writers, is a different kind of entity from a novel. Each form has its own organization. But a short story is more a single thing, more one sustained effort, which has a beginning, a rise, and a fall. And, of course,

a novel has so much wider scope, greater looseness of texture, and so much more room to expand. Many rises and falls are possible, and even necessary. A novel's different from the very first sentence. It's as if you were going to run a race. If you just had to go two hundred yards, you would rely on a very different takeoff and drive and intention, a different wind, than if you were going to run three miles. (This is someone who never does run, so I don't know why I choose that.) But it is a sort of a different girding up that you have to do. It's a different pace, a different timing. In the case of the short story, you can't ever let the tautness of line relax. It has to be all strung very tight upon its single thread usually, and everything is subordinated to the theme of the story: characters and mood and place and time; and none of those things are as important as the development itself. Whereas in a novel you have time to shade a character, allow him his growth, in a short story a character hardly changes from beginning to end. He's in there for the purpose of that story only, and any other modification is ruled out. In a novel you have time for subordinate characters, gradations of mood, subsidiary plots, other things that complement the story or oppose it. The difference is much more than a matter of length—it's a matter of organization and intention and in final effect.

C.T.B.: In your latest novel, *Losing Battles*, at what stage in the writing of this book did it become a novel? When did it depart from being a short story?

MISS WELTY: I first thought of it as a story of the return of a boy from the pen, and I was going to end it when he got home. My idea was to show the difference between how people thought of him and what he was. It was to be just a pure talk story. Well, the moment he arrived, it became a novel. Because he was somebody. And the story was his. I realized the scope of the thing was a good deal larger than I had counted on. But I was still interested in trying to work something out in the technique I started with, altogether by talk and action, trying to *show* everything and not as an author enter the character's mind and say, "He was thinking so-and-so." I wanted it all to be shown forth, brought forth, the way things are in a play, have it become a novel in the mind of the reader, I mean, understood in the mind of the reader.

The thought, the feeling that is *internal* is *shown* as external. I wanted the whole thing externalized. That was why it was a comedy. Because anything that's done in action and talk is a comedy. I wanted to see if I could bring it off. And it was a great job for me to do and very hard for me to do.

C.T.B.: Was it intentional to achieve such a unity of time?

MISS WELTY: Yes, essential. Any novel that you write, of course, carries its timing with it. Its whole meaning and pace and setting and timing and all lie ingrained in the original idea. Any story or novel. I had originally planned *Losing Battles* to happen in one day, but you see it goes over the night into the next morning. That is probably a flaw, but I couldn't resolve it, mainly because the day was a Sunday. I had to have Monday morning. I realized it while I was working because I kept making notes, putting them in another folder saying, "Next A.M.," and then I realized that that was a whole section. I realized that I could not incorporate everything into the one day, so I had to have Monday. But everything does have to be compressed, of course, in any work of fiction. It has to have bounds. You can't begin without staking something off in time and place.

C.T.B.: Because of the longer time span in *Delta Wedding*, did you purposefully try to shorten the time in *Losing Battles*, or did that have anything to do with it?

MISS WELTY: I'm sorry; I can't even remember planning *Delta Wedding*. But one piece of work doesn't affect another, at any rate. *Delta Wedding* did begin as a short story. It was Diarmuid Russell who told me it was a novel. I sent in something called "The Delta Cousins," and he read it and sent it back and said, "This is Chapter Two of a novel," which it is. It was about the little night light. When I say I don't remember planning *Delta Wedding*, what I mean is I don't remember any of the problems and the solving of them. What I remember about anything that's finished with or anything that I am not working on at present is its feeling and what I *tried* to do. But to answer your question, anything having to do with a wedding in the Delta couldn't be compressed into one day. (Laughing) I'm sure it's a much more loosely organized work than *Losing Battles*.

C.T.B.: Do you recall when you first began to write *Losing Battles*? Do you remember the genesis of the novel?

MISS WELTY: I don't know how you would describe a genesis of anything. As I was just telling you, what I thought it was going to be was a short story. I think normally I would have just written it and finished it, the way I do everything else. But owing to personal responsibilities, I couldn't work at it with any sustainment or any regularity, so that what I did was mostly make notes and write scenes and tuck them in a box, with no opportunity to go back and revise, but writing a scene anew, instead of revising it, so that the work prolonged itself. I don't mind any of this, because I was teaching myself all this time. And the fact that it stayed alive in my head over a period of years cheered me up because I thought that it must have some spark of vitality or it would have just faded away. But it kept staying with me; I only kept thinking of more and more scenes. So then when I did have time to work on it, I just had boxes full of scenes. Oh, I have a lot more than is in *Losing Battles*, which, Lord knows, is enough. There were extra incidents, which told the same thing in different terms, different scenes, different characters. And so, it took me a period of years, instead of, maybe, *a* year. And all the time I was doing other things. I was writing lectures and giving lectures. I wrote a children's book. I did many book reviews, occasional assignments, and I was teaching. So it's hard to speak of a genesis or follow the growth of *Losing Battles*, and I don't really know what course it would have taken in an ordinary way.

C.T.B.: Would you comment upon the rather conspicuous absence of Negroes in *Losing Battles*?

MISS WELTY: I didn't know an absence was conspicuous because I thought I had everything in there that mattered. It wouldn't have made any difference at all in *Losing Battles* because the same kind of battles were being fought by the white people as would have been fought by the black. So I don't think that there's anything missing, or anything avoided, there at all. But northeast Mississippi is not a part of the state where there ever were any black people because it's too poor. There weren't plantations where you had sharecroppers and a society like that. There are small, independent, poverty-stricken, white, red clay hill farm-

ers up there, and Negroes never went there. There is, all the same, a very telling and essential incident in *Losing Battles* which is told about, that involves a Negro as such. Perhaps you remember.

C.T.B.: Miss Julia Mortimer has, of course, lost her battle to educate the Renfroes, but really it's a losing battle for everybody in the novel, isn't it?

MISS WELTY: Well, you can look at "losing" in two ways: the verb or the participle. Even though you are losing the battle, it doesn't mean that you aren't eternally fighting them and brave in yourself. And I wanted to show indomitability there. I don't feel it's a novel of despair at all. I feel it's more a novel of admiration for the human being who can cope with any condition, even ignorance, and keep a courage, a joy of life, even, that's unquenchable. But I see human beings as *valuable.* Each life is very valuable in itself, regardless, and in spite of everything.

C.T.B.: E. E. Cummings wrote that "To be nobody but myself means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight." Is it this battle for self-identity, self-preservation, that you had in mind in *Losing Battles*?

MISS WELTY: That could describe one aspect of it, I guess. Certainly, one battle was Gloria's for her own existence in that family of people she'd married into. But the feeling of the solidity of the family, which is the strongest thing in the book, is certainly not a battle of identity. The battle for identity is not even necessary. It's a sticking together. It involves both a submerging and a triumph of the individual, because you can't really conceive of the whole unless you *are* an identity. Unless you are very real in yourself, you don't know what it means to support others or to join with them or to help them. So it's a much more complicated business than identity-seeking, I think. To suggest to any of the characters in *Losing Battles* that they had to *seek* their identities would be a pretty good way to insult them.

C.T.B.: The Renfroes have such faith that with Jack's return things will be better; however, you get the feeling that they will not.

MISS WELTY: That's part of the comedy. Their whole faith and trust in that, which they find necessary, is comic. And *his* faith, Jack's faith, which is where it all comes from: from his point of view, everything is

going to be all right now. I think that's very comical and also very. . . . Well, far be it from me to put tags on my own work.

C.T.B.: Don't you think that it's despairing for Gloria? You can't help but feel for her, particularly in that watermelon scene. I felt squeamish reading that.

MISS WELTY: Yes, well, that's the way people are, though. No, I don't think she's going to win; but, still, she and Jack do love each other. She's the most naïve soul there; she's not Miss Julia Mortimer at all, by any means. And she totally lacks imagination. How could she have married Jack and thought she was going to change him? That's the comic side of her.

C.T.B.: And, of course, she tries to be aloof from the rest.

MISS WELTY: Yes, but I also think their love was quite true, and there's a great deal of strength there, even though they haven't the faintest idea of the fallibility of the whole thing.

C.T.B.: Did you select the 1920s for *Delta Wedding* and the 1930s for *Losing Battles* to achieve a kind of aesthetic distance?

MISS WELTY: Oh, no. I chose those for very particular reasons. In the case of *Delta Wedding* I chose the twenties—when I was more the age of my little girl, which was why I thought best to have a child in it. But in writing about the Delta, I had to pick a year—and this was quite hard to do—in which all the men could be home and uninvolved. It couldn't be a war year. It couldn't be a year when there was a flood in the Delta because those were the times before the flood control. It had to be a year that would leave my characters all free to have a family story. It meant looking in the almanac—in fact, I did—to find a year that was uneventful and that would allow me to concentrate on the people without any undue outside influences; I wanted to write a story that showed the solidity of this family and the life that went on on a small scale in a world of its own. So the date was chosen by necessity. In the case of *Losing Battles* I wanted to get a year in which I could show people at the rock bottom of their whole lives, which meant the Depression. I wanted the poorest part of the state, which meant the northeast corner, where people had the least, the least of all. I wanted a clear stage to bring on this family, to show them when they had really

no props to their lives, had only themselves, plus an indomitable will to live even with losing battles, you know, the losing battles of poverty, of any other kind of troubles, family troubles and disasters. I wanted to take away everything and show them naked as human beings. So that fixed the time and place.

C.T.B.: In a criticism of *Delta Wedding* Louis D. Rubin, Jr., remarked: "The closed little world of Shellmound is doomed. The wide world will come in; there will be disorder, change." Is that a fair assessment? Is Shellmound with its way of life and its values doomed?

MISS WELTY: Oh, yes. I think that was implicit in the novel: that this was all such a fragile, temporary thing. At least I hope it was. That's why I searched so hard to find the year in which that could be most evident. Well, you're living in a very precarious world without knowing it, always.

C.T.B.: Did you have Troy Flavin in mind as the outsider?

MISS WELTY: Yes, in the Delta he was a hill person. He would be more like somebody out of the neighborhood of *Losing Battles*, although I don't mean as a character in *Losing Battles*. But his origins. You see, right outside the Delta there are the hills, and there are not very many miles difference there, but there's a world away in the kinds of people and their backgrounds. He was very different from anybody in the Delta.

C.T.B.: He has a strong attachment for his mother, who gives Troy and Dabney a quilt for a wedding gift. The quilt pattern, "Delectable Mountains," is the same pattern used for Granny Vaughn's quilt in *Losing Battles*.

MISS WELTY: (Surprised) Oh, my Lord! Did I use the same pattern? I never realized that. I'm glad you told me. That's fascinating. I almost called the one in *Losing Battles*—for a time I did—"Dove in the Window." Once it was "The Rocky Road to Dublin." But I guess in both novels what appealed to me was the *Pilgrim's Progress* background of the Delectable Mountains name. And also the idea of the mountains, which would appeal to both those families. I'm sure I went through the same process without realizing I hit on the same quilt name. That's very funny. I know at least thirty other quilt names.

C.T.B.: You mentioned *Pilgrim's Progress*. In your first published short

story, "Death of a Traveling Salesman," R. J. Bowman is journeying to Beulah. Of course, he never makes it. In *The Ponder Heart* there's the Hotel Beulah. And, then, of course, there's Beulah Renfro in *Losing Battles.*

MISS WELTY: It's just a common name, but it also has in each case the right connotations, different every time, for where it's used. Beulah, as you probably know, is a name in use all over Mississippi. In a certain kind of Mississippi town, the leading hotel is always named after a lady. So I just named mine Beulah. There was a different reason for calling the town Beulah, in "Death of a Traveling Salesman"; in this case it stood for Beulah Land, in the old hymn. But I wouldn't ever use a name that was right in feeling if it weren't also typical of the kind of people. I'm careful as I can be about names, and I work hard at them. And I don't use anything that couldn't happen, that wouldn't be right for that part of the country or that kind of family, that time in history. I really do have those things as near right as I can get them because that matters to me. That's why it bothers me to get letters from people saying, "Did you call Phoenix Jackson 'Phoenix' in 'A Worn Path' as a symbol that she would make the trip over and over and over again the way the phoenix lives over and over and over again?" Very well, but I could not have called her that in the first place if the name "Phoenix" were not well-known as a name for people she would have sprung from. She says in there, "I was too old at the Surrender," which put her back in slavery times. I wouldn't have called her that if nobody of her kind had ever been called Phoenix. So it's boring to think that things would be offered for symbolic reasons only, and it would be ridiculous too.

C.T.B.: Then there's Narciss in *The Ponder Heart.*

MISS WELTY: Which is *not* symbolic. There are plenty of reasons for using names.

C.T.B.: When you are writing, are you conscious of your use of symbols?

MISS WELTY: They occur naturally; they are organic. If they're a part of the story, they come readily to hand when you want them, and as often as you want them, and you use them with a proper sense of proportion, and with as light a touch as possible. There's a story that

goes around—I'm sure it's true—about some students saying, "I've finished my story. All I have to do now is go back and put the symbols in." That isn't knowing what a symbol is. A book, a novel itself is a big symbol, and a word is a symbol. Color is a symbol. Anything can be a symbol if the way it's used refers us to the imagination. It's a vocabulary, and it's part of your equipment. But it does not exist for its own sake, something dragged in with a big, red "S" on it. That way, of course, it would have no effect.

C.T.B.: Do you feel distressed when you see an article like "The Symbols in Eudora Welty's Works"?

MISS WELTY: Rather helpless. Especially when they make them symbols of something that could not possibly be true. You know, as if I were really trying to write *Paradise Lost* in some little story about rural Mississippi. That's not a joke. I've seen people do things like that. It's a good reason not to read things.

C.T.B.: Do you plan to write anything else with a more contemporary setting, such as "The Demonstrators"?

MISS WELTY: I've just written a novel, which is coming out in the spring, which takes place as of a couple of years ago. It too is a family story, but it's told from within. People who have read it and whose opinion I respect say it's different from anything else I've ever done. It's much more concentrated and headlong, and it's shorter; it's a very short novel. At all times, I'm interested in individuals, as you may have gathered, and in personal relationships, which to me are the things that matter; personal relationships matter more than any kind of generalizations about the world at large. So the date doesn't terribly matter. You can set stories at any time and place you wish. But since it is all an ordered world, any work of fiction, everything, including time and place, has to be directly applicable to the needs of the story. I couldn't have set *Losing Battles* in the Delta, for instance, where people are comparatively rich, much more sophisticated, where they come and go a lot, have everything to do with the outside world—at least they do now. *Losing Battles* had to be confined by its own world of poverty and isolation. The "contemporary" question doesn't matter in itself. The basic problem is *always* contemporary.

C.T.B.: What will the new work be called?

MISS WELTY: *The Optimist's Daughter.* It was published in the *New Yorker* a year or two ago, but I've changed it some.

C.T.B.: What other plans do you have for your writing?

MISS WELTY: Well, I'm supposed also to be getting my non-fiction together. I have accumulated a whole lot of things over the years—essays, lectures, various things—but I'm taking my time doing that. The thing I'd like to do now is write some more short stories. I have some of those still to be collected in a book, and I'd like to add three or four.

C.T.B.: Tennessee Williams once made the following remark concerning his writing: "I am not a direct writer; I am always an oblique writer, if I can be; I want to be allusive." Do you feel this same tendency to be "allusive"?

MISS WELTY: Well, it's not a tendency; it's a technique. All fiction writers work by indirection; to show, not to tell; not to make statements about a character, but to demonstrate it in his actions or his conversations or by suggesting his thoughts, so that the reader understands for himself. Because fiction accomplishes its ends by using the oblique. Anything lighted up from the side, you know, shows things in a relief that you can't get with a direct beam of the sun. And the imagination works all around the subject to light it up and reveal it in all its complications.

C.T.B.: Has your interest in painting and photography in any way paralleled your writing techniques?

MISS WELTY: Well, I suppose they're all aspects of the visual mind. I see things in pictures. I'm not anything at all of a painter. I love painting. I have no talent for it. The only talent I have—for writing, I was blessed with it—is quite visual. And anything I imagine in what I read or write, I see it. I understand that's the commonest form of the imagination.

C.T.B.: Do you feel that your writing reflects a particularly feminine point of view?

MISS WELTY: I am a woman. In writing fiction, I think imagination comes ahead of sex. A writer's got to be able to live inside all charac-

ters: male, female, old, young. To live inside *any* other person is the jump. Whether the other persons are male or female is subordinate.

C.T.B.: Why have there been so few really great women writers?

MISS WELTY: Well, I think there have been not a few great women writers, of course. Jane Austen. I don't see how anyone could have a greater scope in knowledge of human nature and reveal more of human nature than Jane Austen. Consider Virginia Woolf. The Brontës. Well, you know as many as I do: great women writers. I'm not interested in any kind of a feminine repartee. I don't *care* what sex people are when they write. I just want the result to be a good book. All that talk of women's lib doesn't apply *at all* to women writers. We've always been able to do what we've wished. I couldn't feel less deprived as a woman to be writing, and I certainly enjoy all the feelings of any other human being. The full complement is available. I have the point of view of a woman, but if I'm not able to imagine myself into what another human being who is a man might feel, which I have to do all the time when I write, well, it's just from poverty of imagination. It's a matter of imagination, not sex.

C.T.B.: Commenting upon her art, Flannery O'Connor once said, "Mine is a comic art, but that does not detract from its seriousness." A critic for the *New York Times Book Review* wrote that "Eudora Welty possesses the surest comic sense of any American writer alive." Does such a statement make you wonder sometimes if the seriousness of your work may be overlooked?

MISS WELTY: Of course not. No, I think Flannery O'Connor was absolutely and literally right in what she says: that the fact that something is comic does not detract from its seriousness, because the comic and the serious are not opposites. You might as well say satire is not serious, and it's probably the most deadly serious of any form of writing, even though it makes you laugh. No, I think comedy is able to tackle the most serious matters that there are. I'm delighted that the critic thinks that I have a good comic spirit. And I think that's taking me seriously.

C.T.B.: Do you discover something about yourself in creating your characters?

MISS WELTY: Well, it isn't your object, of course. No, I don't think

you're thinking about yourself at all when you're creating characters. What you do learn is something about the subject on which you're writing, through creating your characters; you learn more and more about human relationships through what you're doing. What you're trying to do is make a story, a work, a piece of art, if possible, in which lies all that you yourself have learned or experienced.

C.T.B.: William Faulkner remarked that Dilsey was one of his favorite characters. Have you created any characters whom you particularly admire?

MISS WELTY: Well, I don't think of any characters as existing outside the book in which they happen, outside the story. I think you get very fond of the people in your work, but it has nothing to do with their artistic achievement. It's purely a personal thing, just as you like certain people in life; your love may not be a certification of their worth. But in the case of Dilsey, of course she was a magnificent and beautiful creation, a marvelous creation.

C.T.B. Phoenix Jackson is too, I feel.

MISS WELTY: Well, thank you. I love her.

C.T.B.: In your essay, "Place in Fiction," you state that "Making reality real is art's responsibility." Would you agree, then, with William Faulkner's contention that "The writer's only responsibility is to his art"?

MISS WELTY: Well, I don't think those two statements are using the word "responsibility"—I don't think those are within the same category. The way I used the word in "Place in Fiction" was in a particular and specific connection: using place to make character believable and action believable and so on. I wasn't talking about art's responsibility. . . . I've forgotten exactly what his words were.

C.T.B.: "The writer's only responsibility is to his art."

MISS WELTY: That's a very different kind of statement. The responsibility is a big general one. It's his *personal* responsibility, which is a very great one.

C.T.B.: Do you think there has been a decline in regional identification?

MISS WELTY: Yes, because regions are no longer very definite, places are not as different from one another as they used to be. In the South

or in New England or the Southwest, small towns still have a living identity, but I think you're certainly aware of the life of the country as a whole flowing through everywhere. You don't feel that you're cut off anymore, I'm sure.

C.T.B.: Were you pleased with the dramatization of *The Ponder Heart*?

MISS WELTY: Well, I could answer that on several levels. I had nothing to do with the dramatization. It was done by two adapters, and it was completely changed from my book, of course, because the book existed as a monologue by one of the characters, Edna Earle Ponder. We see everything through her; what we are interested in is how she looks at things. Well, naturally, on the stage she was made a character at whom we are looking from the outside, and made subordinate to Uncle Daniel, the one who is the subject of her story. So that to an author is rather wrenching. And then by necessity the story itself was changed, and some of the characterizations. And they even took some lines from characters in my other short stories and put them into the mouths of people in *The Ponder Heart*, which was very strange. However, once I got used to all that, I rather enjoyed the play because of the performers, who were all very warm and understanding. They had read my novel, too, and were trying to use that to guide them in their characterizations, they told me. They were all terribly nice people, and they gave a gentle and warm performance, and I liked it for its own sake.

C.T.B.: Have you had any other offers to dramatize or film any of your work?

MISS WELTY: Well, these arise every now and again, but nothing comes of it. That seems to be usual. So I've learned to not get excited when someone wires, "Do nothing until you hear from me." You don't ever hear anything.

There have been some interesting things done locally with my stories by New Stage Theater and by Educational Television. The groups really are quite imaginative and expert, and I'm awfully pleased to have been in such good hands. They did an evening called "A Season of Dreams," made of excerpts and scenes from my stories. This was done both at New Stage and on ETV. It's enjoyable to watch them work. It teaches

me a lot to see things put together and watch something being made to work dramatically.

C.T.B.: In a recently published essay called "The Short Story," Joyce Carol Oates remarked that the short story is a "dream verbalized" and that "the most interesting thing about it is its mystery." Would you agree that these remarks coincide with your own feelings about the genre?

MISS WELTY: Well, I don't know the context out of which those words came. "A dream verbalized" doesn't mean much to me. What's the other thing?

C.T.B.: "The most interesting thing about it is its mystery."

MISS WELTY: I agree with that. Well, I don't know how Miss Oates meant this; I don't know if I'm agreeing with her opinion or not. I'm agreeing with the fact. The sense of mystery in life we do well to be aware of. And, of course, I think we do try to suggest that mystery in writing a story, not through any direct or cheap way but by simply presenting the way things happen. Mystery is a real and valid element, both in life and in fiction. I agree with that.

C.T.B.: Would you assess the importance that dreams seem to have for the characters in your fiction?

MISS WELTY: I think dreams have an importance, but no greater an importance than many other things: ideas, meetings, letters, conversations. They're all component parts of the interior world, and if I've ever overemphasized dreams, I wasn't aware of it, although I've often written about people that might be over-given to dreaming, you know, young girls or old people. I've used dreams, of course, when I need to express something that's outside the range of what I can show otherwise.

C.T.B.: And dreams would be necessary for you because of your concern for the interior life.

MISS WELTY: Right. They are. In the case of daydreams often. That's part of living. But I didn't mean to give an over important place to dreams.

C.T.B.: There is, then, no particular psychologist or philosopher whose ideas of dreams, such as Freud, has any especial influence on you?

MISS WELTY: No. I don't think any ideas come to you from other

people's minds, when you're writing, as directives. You can't take hints and suggestions from this person and that to know where you're going. It's just outside the whole process of writing a story. That all has to come from within. It doesn't mean that you haven't read things and understood things through reading and come to think things through reading that don't filter down and apply. What I mean is you're not using a snippet of Freud and a little piece of Jung or anything like that. Any more than a composer would take a piece of—Well, of course, they *do*, in popular music. (Laughing) That's not a good analogy. But you wouldn't take a scrap of someone else's painting and put it in your painting. You might both be treating of the same landscape, but you would put on paint as a matter of vision in both cases; your painting is your vision, not somebody else's vision.

C.T.B.: Your influences, then, would be more cultural and imaginative than literary?

MISS WELTY: When you're writing, your influences are by way of the imagination only. That doesn't mean that there couldn't be many unconscious forces at play. Of course that's true. But I think of my source as real life itself—nothing to do with reference books.

C.T.B.: What stories do you reread?

MISS WELTY: I don't reread my stories. Giving readings on the lecture platform made me go back and reread stories to select from—the early ones were the only ones short enough. My reaction was how I could have made them better. I could see many faults that a little transposing and cutting would help. But I'm not interested in anything but the new, really. The only thing that absorbs me is what I'm working on, work ahead. I don't mean that I don't have affection and respect for the work I've done, and a wish that it had been better. But it's not an immediate concern to me.

C.T.B.: What other authors do you enjoy rereading?

MISS WELTY: Oh, I love to reread so many authors. I'm just getting ready to read Jane Austen again. E. M. Forster. Henry Green. Virginia Woolf. Oh, there are so many people I love to read and reread.

C.T.B.: How do you feel generally about literary criticism?

MISS WELTY: When can it be helpful to me as a writer? That I don't

know. I do like to read the general literary criticism of good critics such as Edmund Wilson, just as I like to read good biographies or good anything else. I like the exercise of the mind and the fascination of learning, perhaps understanding new territories in other minds and hearts. I've just finished reading Robert Penn Warren on Theodore Dreiser, that long essay that was in *The Southern Review*, which was absolutely fascinating. It certainly showed me I had to reproach myself, since I'd never paid Theodore Dreiser any homage at all. It's brilliant and marvelous, profoundly instructive—a critic and poet offering his insight into another creative mind. Yes, I was thrilled by it, but not helped. What a waste of time and feeling to read for self-help! Maybe such a study will help me, by the exercise of my mind and the moving of my heart, but any "help" for my own work coming to me has to be by remote control and received by me all unknowing.

C.T.B.: In accepting the National Medal of Literature recently, E. B. White made this comment. "Today, with so much of earth damaged and endangered, with so much of life dispiriting or joyless, a writer's courage can easily fail him. I feel this daily. In the face of so much bad news, how does one sustain one's belief?" How would you answer his question?

MISS WELTY: Well, I don't think it has any answer because it's certainly a fact of life; but just the fact that Mr. White said that is in a way its own answer. The facing of it and the grasping of it and the statement of it is in a way dealing with it, and a wonderful spirit like Mr. White's would always be capable of doing that very thing. All of our history must have been thought of, as we lived through it, as being the absolute worst or the lowest or the most threatening or the most something, and the human spirit seems to have survived many dark ages. And I think it's through the *individual* spirit, which is what Mr. White is, and what most fiction writers are, most artists. I believe the human spirit will survive, and that's not to minimize in the least, any more than he does, the existence and threat of all these horrors in the world.

C.T.B.: He concludes that the author must not despair.

MISS WELTY: No, in fact I don't think you are despairing as long as

you're working. Your work is an answer. I don't mean that working keeps you from thinking about it. I mean that working is the answer, in itself. By putting something on paper, and doing it well, making a meaning and an order out of some of the world in fiction. It's the human spirit answering in its own terms. I don't know if that's clearly enough put.

C.T.B.: Do you think that some fiction writers today have a tendency to emphasize philosophy too much in their works?

MISS WELTY: Well, you can skip that. . . . I didn't mean to be flippant, but to me fiction isn't the place for philosophy. Philosophy has its own very great place, and we should consult it and learn from it as much as we can. But in fiction I think it's irrelevant and intrusive, when put in *as* philosophy.

C.T.B.: What have been some of your more distressing moments as a writer?

MISS WELTY: I can't think of any, really. I love to write. I'm never happier than when I'm working. It doesn't matter how hard it is; in fact, I love hard things to write. I try harder and harder. I want to do harder and harder things because that's the fascination. I'm utterly happy when I'm revising. Throwing away gives me a great elation sometimes. So I haven't had any distressing moments, and I've had good luck in my writing life with good friends as editors and agents, and I've had a very happy time as a writer. I'm not bothered now and I was not deeply bothered then by the long periods of not being able to sell stories when I began; the fact that I never made much money doesn't have anything to do with it because the writing itself is the deepest pleasure to me. I love to read, and I love to write, and for the same reason, I think.

I get letters sometimes from students saying, "Can I come down and talk to you about this gut-tearing, soul-destroying practice of our craft, our art?" I don't want *them* to come. I have a good time writing.

C.T.B.: Do you feel that you have a built-in audience?

MISS WELTY: I'm grateful for any audience I may have, but at the same time my real working life isn't affected by the thought of readers. I don't think about readers while I'm writing, but only of the story. Of

course, I couldn't hope more strongly for the pleasure of good friends on whose judgment I rely, but that comes afterwards, when I've done all I can and stuck the story in the mail. I know I have good friends who understand my work, and I hope will tell me if they think I've made a disastrous mistake somewhere along the line. This is deeply important to me. I really don't know what you mean by a built-in audience.

C.T.B.: An audience who is eagerly awaiting the next Eudora Welty work.

MISS WELTY: I'm grateful to think there could be such a thing. That's very comforting!

C.T.B.: We waited a long time.

MISS WELTY: Well, thank them for waiting. I do thank them.

C.T.B.: What is your reaction to reading analyses of your work?

MISS WELTY: It neither helps nor hurts. Because by the time something is in print, you've usually written it a while ago, and you're now working on something else. It's too late to—not that you would change anything—but it's too late even to have your mistakes pointed out and to have your virtues pointed out, which is usually just as mistaken as the mistakes. It doesn't help any. And it makes me very nervous to read. . . , especially some things that are so terribly farfetched. I get sent things, from time to time, and I will see how they start out, and then I feel that I would just rather not read on. I don't mean that to sound disdainful. It's just that I don't see the connection.

C.T.B.: It's difficult as a teacher, however, not to use analysis. Unfortunately, students seem to want some snappy epigram that will sum up the work for them.

MISS WELTY: Well, what they ought to be given is some more stories by the same person. They should be advised to keep reading, is the way I feel about it. The horrifying thing is that they grew up in homes where people didn't read. They don't know what the imagination can tell you. They reach out for a snappy . . . whatever you called it.

C.T.B.: Epigram.

MISS WELTY: At some future point, the students are going to descend on the writer with a tape recorder and tell him to justify that epigram. But the worst is that these students will later become teachers them-

selves, and pass on the stuff that's being fed to them now. I suppose you've thought about the consequences. What they need to do is learn to use their imaginations, to recognize imagination. They need to know the medium in which stories are written, which is again the imagination. I really don't know anything about teaching, but my firm inclination is to tell them to read more. But it really is too bad when you think of all they're going to miss the rest of their lives if they've never learned anything except a couple of snappy epigrams, which they think is an equivalent of the story. And, of course, it isn't. Nothing is, except possibly another story by the same person.

C.T.B.: Unhappily, students often come with the preconceived notion that if the story does not meet their demands then the story is no good.

MISS WELTY: Well, it's just their loss, and that's all there is to it. They'll never learn by being collaborated with. And it seems to me a shame to risk a betrayal of art, to ruin art in order that a student will think he's getting something. In fact, I don't even think it's honest. To make a work of imagination out to be something in another category, that can be learned in capsule terms, as an algebraic, or mathematical formula, is not honest. But it's so sad; it makes you wonder what they will ever have in their lives to make up for that loss. But there will always be *some*, though. There will always be some. After all, we came along, we can read, although I think we came along in more congenial times, me much more so than you. But there will always be some.

C.T.B.: But don't you feel that there is a kind of prevailing anti-intellectual climate?

MISS WELTY: Oh, yes, but there have been other anti-intellectual climates, and I don't think that that necessarily stops us. You could have an anti-intellectual climate and still have a climate that would accept works of the imagination. They don't necessarily cancel out.

C.T.B.: In a recent interview R. Buckminster Fuller remarked that "Science begins with the awareness of the absolute mystery of universe." Might the word "literature" be substituted for "science"?

MISS WELTY: Well, I certainly think that poets knew it all along, the absolute mystery of the universe. That's what Shakespeare says in every word. I don't know the context of Fuller's remark, or exactly what he

means by "science" here—whether he means knowledge, the knowledge of science, or the terrible power of science, which is what people think of these days, the frightening things. I think if he used it in the sense of knowledge, that is what literature is written in the sense of, an awareness. The power of science is a brutal concept. I don't want brutality dealing with mysteries.

C.T.B.: A difficulty arises when one tries to unravel the mystery in your story "The Purple Hat." It's a short story that many critics seem to puzzle over.

MISS WELTY: That's a small mystery! (Laughing) I wish I hadn't written that story. I saw it dramatized last year, an off-Broadway thing, which only brought home to me its failings. It was just an odd story I wrote in an odd moment, about something I don't know much about: gambling. But I really meant it to be no more than a kind of playful ghost story.

C.T.B.: Some have read allegory into it.

MISS WELTY: Well, I can't be responsible. I meant it to be a ghost story, a playful ghost story. I wasn't trying to be allegorical or anything else.

C.T.B.: What, perhaps, is the most outlandish interpretation of your work that you can recall?

MISS WELTY: Oh, let's not go into the outlandish. I don't mean to be disparaging about any criticism because I think it, some of it, can be valuable, extremely valuable. I only repeat that as far as helping the author goes, nothing helps in heaven or earth when you're writing. It's just you out there by yourself. That's the way you want it.

LEWIS M. DABNEY

"Was": Faulkner's Classic Comedy of the Frontier

I

"THERE IS NO such thing as 'was'—only 'is,'" Faulkner says in his *Paris Review* interview. "If 'was' existed there would be no grief or sorrow." This recalls Quentin's preoccupation with time, and his father's maunderings—"was [he said] the saddest word of all there is nothing else in the world its not despair until time its not even time until it was." It also directs us to the rollicking first tale of *Go Down, Moses*, best known for the poker games in which Uncle Buck's marriage to Miss Sophonsiba is at stake. "Was" is a tale without grief or sorrow, for the humor banishes these. An idyllic prologue to the sexual and social traumas of Faulkner's modern world, its virtuosity and richness place it with his finest shorter fiction. Overshadowed by "The Bear," the story has been taken as background or comic relief, and has never received justice in the criticism.

Through the folklore he cherishes Faulkner reaches back to the Southern frontier, subverting the official legend of the old South. Like Mark Twain he debunks genteel affections out of Sir Walter Scott, and his image of carefree boyhood and bachelor days is worthy of Twain, a slapstick Eden in the best traditions of American male nostalgia.

Cass, the narrator, has the innocent eye of a younger Huck; while Tomey's Turl, both a McCaslin and a slave, controls the action like the successfully manipulative servant of eighteenth-century plays. Theophilus and Amodeus McCaslin, familiarly Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy, are "humors" characters like those of Smollett, as Cleanth Brooks has remarked, and so are their antagonists Mr. Hubert and Miss Sophonsiba. All are joined in the circular routine set by the burlesque fox hunts of the overture and coda. The dogs chase the fox, the men chase the slave, the woman chases her man, men pursue gain and rescue other men. The story is a ritual affirmation of life, and an assertion of the capacity of art to transcend time.

Faulkner's statement of his credo in the same interview speaks directly to this story:

> The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that 100 years later, when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life. Since man is mortal, the only immortality possible for him is to leave something behind him that is immortal since it will always move.

This is Aristotelian, and it shows Faulkner's debt to Keats, whose "Grecian Urn" gave him an enduring image of arrested motion. The lines made much of in "The Bear" apply to the comic pursuits in "Was"—"She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss./Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair." Where the Lena/Lucas/Byron triangle of *Light in August* is a slow motion version of Keats, and Lena walks through the opening pages of the novel "like something moving forever and without progress across an urn," "Was" is wilder than a Keystone cops chase. But the story, too, attains the effect of a frieze, via tall tale, vaudeville, and the funnies as well as the techniques of film.

The subjects of slavery and sex are significantly intertwined, with sex a greater issue than race. In trying to reestablish his authority over Tomey's Turl, Buck comes under the power of Sophonsiba; and the black man plays an essential part in Buddy's freeing of Buck from her, because he stands to gain his own woman. All this will not endear the tale to some readers. Blacks may object that Faulkner treats the pursuit of a slave in comic terms (even though it is the masters who are

made fools of) and reject Tomey's Turl as three-quarters white and too easily satisfied. Women's Lib would not enjoy Miss Sophonsiba, while making much of the fact that she is traded off like the Negroes at the poker table. "Was" may, indeed, be seen as a document of white male chauvinism if one will admit it also shows the weaknesses of Buck and Buddy's position, their distance from the feudal world which Faulkner parodies. His humor, lacking any desperation here, exorcises and heals. He gives us heroes the reverse of chauvinists, who do not want the responsibility of either the woman or the slaves, and have their own vision of freedom and community.

The story stands well on its own, like the other parts of *Go Down, Moses*, and the typescript at the University of Virginia reveals its independent origins. There Hubert Beauchamp is Jason Prim and "Warwick" is Primrose. There is a first person narrator, not Cass but Bayard, without the Sartoris but with Ringo as a friend. "Was" does not belong with the Sartorises, and the changes sharpen its focus. Uncle Buck no longer cries "O godfrey, Bayard" in the moment of his capture, while the name Warwick lets Sophonsiba remind us of "the place in England that she said Mr. Hubert was probably the true earl of only he never even had enough pride, not to mention energy, to take the trouble to establish his just rights." Faulkner regularizes and smooths the diction, depriving the local color of self-consciousness. The tale portrays its special strains of Southern and American culture, for which the novel of the McCaslins makes a good context. One can document its background while appreciating the brilliance, energy, and clarity of its art.

II

The structure of "Was" is symmetrical, with a prologue introducing Isaac McCaslin as the folk narrator, the long development of Buck's pursuit of Turl counterpointed with Miss Sophonsiba's of Buck, the two poker games as climax and resolution, and the return home. The opening sketch of "Uncle Ike" is directed to this story as well as to the rest of *Go Down, Moses*. In "Was" we do not know he is Buck and Sophonsiba's son, but like Buck and Buddy he is a bachelor of nature, a seeker for truth in the frontier life. The link with the past, he

is also the break in the chain, being heirless and having renounced his property. His purity helps writer and reader momentarily to suspend judgment and enjoy a tale of the old South. Faulkner stresses "the hearing, the listening," and he makes Cass—from whom we hear the tale as told to Ike—Ike's surrogate father. The oral tradition is what is left of a patriarchal society.

From this introduction we are plunged into an absurd and tumultuous scene, in one of Faulkner's nonstop sentences that convey all the excitement, the confusion and jumble of events; a play-by-play description comparable to a wildly comic film, which is followed by the assurance that it is all much ado about nothing:

> When he and Uncle Buck ran back to the house from discovering that Tomey's Turl had run again, they heard Uncle Buddy cursing and bellowing in the kitchen, then the fox and the dogs came out of the kitchen and crossed the hall into the dogs' room and they heard them run through the dogs' room into his and Uncle Buck's room then they saw them cross the hall into Uncle Buddy's room and heard them run through Uncle Buddy's room into the kitchen again and this time it sounded like the whole kitchen chimney had come down and Uncle Buddy bellowing like a steamboat blowing and this time the fox and dogs and five or six sticks of firewood all came out of the kitchen together with Uncle Buddy in the middle of them hitting at everything in sight with another stick. It was a good race.

This is the overture, the statement of the theme of the chase. The pet fox is "treed" behind the clock on the mantel and Uncle Buck shoves him back into the crate under the bed, while picking up the necktie he must wear for the pursuit of Tomey's Turl. Turl, Cass knows, must be caught before he gets to the Beauchamp place where he is going to see his girl, Tennie, or else Mr. Hubert will fetch him back, bringing his old maid sister, and they will stay for a week or longer, with Uncle Buddy driven out of the house and Buck in danger of capture by her. There are rules: it is a ritual dance, appropriate to the introduction of the old regime; not, however, the predictable and decorous minuet, or even a gavotte, but a *courante*, a run.

The phrase "It was a good race" becomes a refrain. "It was the

best race he had ever seen," Cass thinks of the pursuit of Turl to the ford; "it wasn't any race at all," he observes when Turl later fools the dogs and leads them astray; "a fine race, but the tree was too quick," is his response to the concluding fox hunt in the house. This helps us locate the tale in Faulkner's own experience. In *Old Times in the Faulkner Country* John Cullen, describing a hunting episode which his writer friend drew upon, mentions another man who "enjoyed the race William described more than any hunter I ever knew enjoyed any race I ever heard of." The humor that is part of this enjoyment does not accord with mythologizing and has little place in "The Bear." In "Was," Faulkner makes use of the camaraderie and the pure zest of the hunt. Of another episode Cullen says: "On the morning of the third day, I found where the deer were hiding. Since we had not had a race that morning I suggested that we go there and make a drive that afternoon. We put the dogs in a pick-up truck and drove to the place. . . ." Here are Uncle Buck and Mr. Hubert risen from their after-dinner naps and setting out again after Turl. From their names, Uncle Bud Miller, Mr. Ike Roberts, Red Bright, and the others Cullen talks about seem to have contributed to the characterization.

Faulkner is not projecting all this back upon the past. The old culture of his region had survived among his hunting friends as it had among his father's cronies who sat around the livery stable and the hardware store telling tales. A passage from Cash's *The Mind of the South* shows the historicity of "Was," the appropriateness of its tempo and spirit. Cash compares the Southern fox hunter with the English squire:

> It was not that hoary and sophisticated class tradition dictated galloping to hounds. It was not even, in the first place, that he knew that English squires so behaved, and hungered to identify himself with them by imitation, though this of course was to play a great part in confirming and fixing the pattern. It was simply and primarily for the same reason that, in his youth and often into late manhood, he ran spontaneous and unpremeditated foot-races, wrestled, drank Gargantuan quantities of raw whiskey, let off wild yells, and hunted the possum: —because the thing was already in his mores when he emerged from the backwoods, because on the

> frontier it was the obvious thing to do, because he was a hot stout fellow, full of blood and reared to outdoor activity, because of a primitive and naïve zest for the pursuit in hand.

Cash also observes of the Southwestern frontier that "Whirl was king," which is just the atmosphere of "Was."

The pursuit of the escaping slave as sport is also historical, although Faulkner sentimentalizes this subject. It was one of the cruel possibilities of slavery he worked his way around, through the references to chasing blacks with dogs in the Indian tales, Sutpen's recapturing of the French architect in *Absalom, Absalom!* and Percy Grimm's tracking down of Joe Christmas. A "protest tale" in Richard Dorson's collection of black folktales may set off the pursuit of Tomey's Turl. A man who is stopped without a pass makes it home by outrunning the patrollers, and is then challenged to a second race.

> They told her [his mistress] to let him go up to the gin-house (where they ginned cotton) and race John back to the house, and they'd never whip him when they'd ketch him out, if he outrun John.
>
> When John was about half-way to the house Romey was going through the front door.

The men apparently kept their word, but the outcome does not make this race less horrible. The storyteller goes on:

> Romey told us he could outrun bloodhounds, till they were too tired to jump over the fence. Then he'd let the fence down so they could get through, circle around in the field back to the fence, and put it up again . . . When he'd get tired of fooling with 'em, he'd go into this cemetery, and raise up the top on the marble stones, and stretch out under it and slide the slab back over him. When the dogs tracked him up there the patterolls would call the dogs off and say it was a ghost—they was scared, you see.

Here is authority for Turl's elaboration of the chase, though again Faulkner's scene is softer. The climax anticlimax pattern serves his comic purpose. Thus "Black John [Uncle Buck's horse] came out of the trees, driving, soupled out flat and level as a hawk . . . with a sparrow riding it, across the field and over the ditch and across the next field";

but Turl on the old Jake mule went just fast enough to get to the ford first. In the second, afternoon chase, with Uncle Buck and Mr. Hubert "roaring," Buck and his horse "vanished over the hill like they had run at the blank edge of the world itself," in time to see the dogs surrounding the fugitive "like they were trying to jump up and lick him in the face." The Southern writer is reassuring himself about the old days here. But Faulkner does not pretend that the fate of the McCaslins' slaves is representative. The halfway abolitionism of Buddy and Buck, and the fact that Turl is a member of the family, justify this within the tale.

Faulkner relies upon an ancient plot. Buck treats Turl as the fox—"you stay where he won't see you and flush. I'll circle him through the woods and we will bay him at the creek ford"—but this fox is smarter than the hunter. And the latter becomes the fox at "Warwick," where Miss Sophonsiba's pursuit of Buck alternates with and then absorbs the theme of the Negro's flight. When Buck is finally caught in her trap and seems condemned to marry her, Hubert says, "She's got you, 'Filus. You run a hard race and you run a good one, but you skun the henhouse one time too many." He supplements this with another version of the beast fable:

> All right; you were a grown man and you knew it was bear-country and you knew the way back out like you knew the way in and you had your chance to take it. But no. You had to crawl into the den and lay down by the bear. And whether you did or didn't know the bear was in it don't make any difference. So if you got back out of that den without even a claw mark on you, I would not only be unreasonable, I'd be a damned fool.

The tall talk of the frontier and the idiom of rational man come to the rescue of the comic cliché, the fear of woman that has been a staple of our popular culture.

III

Miss Sophonsiba is the necessary scapegoat of the piece, the threat that enhances the male Eden of the sixty-year-old Buck and Buddy and the nine-year-old Cass, which Mr. Hubert so envies. "I'd like a little

peace and quiet and freedom myself," he says. Like *Huckleberry Finn* "Was" comes from the frontier tradition in which woman equals pressure and pretension, although the manners Sophonsiba tries to impose on the men are not those of Twain's respectable Widow, Miss Watson, and Aunt Sally. Buck vigorously rejects her courtship, as he has for years. He is "woman-weak," as his name indicates and Hubert says, comparing him to Buddy. Bachelor freedom is dramatized in the chase for Tomey's Turl around the countryside and into the night, the camaraderie, the whiskey, the betting, etc. "Was" is a classic protest against growing up insofar as this means "settling down."

Such a stance in the battle of the sexes is native to the tall tale as it descended to Faulkner. It was a product of men in isolation from women. In the leisurely Oxford of their boyhood, his brother Murry says, store and office were sanctuaries where the primary business was storytelling and woman was an intruder. Murry Falkner, whose description of the art agrees with Twain's "How to Tell a Story," writes amusingly of the occasional housewife who had to push past her husband in order to buy something—"he may have even had to inconvenience himself to the extent of moving his chair over a few inches." Faulkner wrote to Cowley that "being the eldest of four boys, I escaped my mother's influence pretty easy . . . I more or less grew up in my father's livery stable." His mother's influence seems to have been strong enough, but this has its inner truth. The ambience of male solidarity shapes Faulkner's work, conspicuously his female characterizations. In *The Hamlet* and "Old Man" one can hear the chorus on the porch of the store or in their bunks in prison, talking up the remarkable nature of the other sex. Sophonsiba is a tall tale version of the desperate spinster, the decaying Southern belle.

With her roan tooth and simpering gentility she would be grotesque if she were not so delightfully absurd. She does not stop with archly sexual offers to "sweeten Buck's toddy with the hand of a Mississippi lady" and to show him her private garden, or with sending him, during the hunt for Turl, her red ribbon with the message "success." While she tries to impose her ritual of acting the lady of the castle on the rough and easygoing ways of the men, she is plotting with Turl to keep

Buck at Warwick until midnight, and arranging for him to get into the wrong bed. Mark Twain's Victorian conventions survive only as a weapon of the female. They set up Buck's unique defense of his position: "Say I did walk into a lady's bedroom, even Miss Sophonsiba's: say, just for the sake of the argument, there wasn't no other lady in the world but her and so I walked into hers and tried to get into bed with her, would I have took a nine-year-old boy with me?"

Sophonsiba's pitiful aristocratic pretensions help Faulkner expose the gulf between the legend of the old South and realities in his part of the country. This was as significant to him as to W. J. Cash. In discussing "Was" at the University of Virginia he claimed "a certain sociological importance" for the tale:

> People lived from day to day, with a bluff and crude hardiness, but with a certain simplicity. Which to me is very interesting because the common picture of the South is all magnolias and crinoline and Grecian portals and things like that, which was true only around the fringes of the South. Not in the interior, the back wood.

He made this contrast more than once:

> In Natchez they had the fine Empire furniture, people had—they spent their money on *objets d'art* from Europe, furnishings and fine clothes. In the country, these people, they were aristocracy, but they were still frontier, they were still the tall man with the long rifle, in a way. That even their splendor was a little on the slovenly side, that they went through the motions of living like dukes and princes but their life wasn't too different from the man who lived in a mud-floored hovel.

Hence Sophonsiba's florid "Welcome to Warwick," at which Buck and Cass must "drag their foot" (their bow), while Hubert greets them with his boots off in the spring house, drinking a toddy, then "warn[s] them again, as he always did, to watch out for the rotted floor board he hadn't got around to having fixed yet." The brother and sister are a classic pair. He must suffer her, and depends on her—he loses his grip, as we learn in "The Bear," when she finally marries Buck and is not around to keep him in line.

Pretension is not limited to woman, even in "Was." We are told of old Carothers with his grand unfinished house which Buck and

Buddy gave over to the Negroes, to move into a two-room cabin. In *Absalom, Absalom!* Sutpen embodies the paradoxes of a frontier aristocracy. For three years before his marriage he roughs it in the magnificent establishment he has struggled for, the house unpainted and unfurnished and without windows and doors, the man living on game; he later scandalizes his wife by fighting naked hand-to-hand with his slaves. The conflict was real enough to Faulkner, and there is much of him in Sophonsiba's airs, though he did not care to admit that. Allen Tate writes of "something grandiose in the profusion with which he sprinkled his remarks with 'Sir' and 'Ma'am.'" Tate continues: "Years ago, when I was editing *The Sewanee Review*, I had some correspondence with him; his letters were signed 'Faulkner.' I wrote him that English nobility followed this practice and I never heard from him again."

Faulkner's closeness to the characters gives his comedy of manners an affection Twain's lacks, and keeps it from becoming satire. Realist that he is about his people and their world, he cherishes their foibles, and his plot is all innocence, harmless and exuberant activity. The characters support each other in their roles. Buck and Hubert, betting extravagantly on the outcome of the chase of Turl, glare at each other to show how in earnest they are: they solemnize the bet with the word "Done," and reminding one another, each later twice repeats the word. These images of harmony emerging from conflict extend across the racial barrier. When Turl is caught in Tennie's cabin at midnight, desperate as he is, he is careful not to hurt the white man in his way:

> he knocked Uncle Buck down and then caught him before he fell without even stopping, snatched him up under one arm, still running, and carried him along for about ten feet, saying, "Look out of here, old Buck, Look out of here, old Buck," before he threw him away and went on.

What keeps this from being sentimental is that we know from Hubert that Turl is a McCaslin—for Faulkner the brotherhood of man is literal—which is why Turl gets away with as much as he does. The scene prepares for his tactical alliance with Buddy in the second poker game, just as the code Buck and Hubert share ensures that there will be a poker game and then another one, instead of the forced marriage. As

we knew Sophonsiba would be waiting for Buck in that bed we know he will escape again, because if all the men want to win the game they are playing, they want to continue it more.

IV

The resolution at the card table makes "Was" one of Faulkner's taller tales. He overtops the old Southwestern gambling stories, "sublimating the actual into apocryphal," as he once described his first principle. He imagined, he says, the comedy of the man that couldn't extricate himself from an engagement and "had to call on his brother, and his brother used the only tools he had, which was his ability to play poker." Slaves, being capital, had often been stakes, so why not a man and his freedom, a woman and her marriage? Faulkner denies the dehumanization by putting everyone in the same boat—the slave's and the master's cause depend upon the turn of the same card. The stakes make the situation, as Brooks says, almost farcical. Farcical, too, is the seeming submission to chance in a ritual of male supremacy. Yet the bets must be closely followed, and the first hand builds up to the second, the great contest of tall tale tradition—"any man who ever played poker once with Uncle Buddy would never mistake him again for Uncle Buck or anybody else."

Uncle Buddy is more than a poker player, although less fully humanized than Buck. In a story about the opposition of male and female principles he reconciles the two. He never leaves home, he does all the cooking and is slightly plump from sitting in the rocking chair before the kitchen fireplace. He "didn't own a necktie at all," something Buck interprets in his own terms—"Uncle Buddy wouldn't take that chance even in a section like theirs where ladies were so damn seldom thank God that a man could ride for days in a straight line without having to dodge a single one." In fact, Buddy is immune to women, and while his brother is out dodging them he is waiting to be called on to get him out of trouble. If Buck represents the joy of the ritual, Buddy is its perpetuation. At the poker table as elsewhere he is dead serious. He doesn't drink, and won't let Cass, who dealt the cards for

Buck and Hubert, be involved in gambling. He sits with his hands in his lap as Faulkner's country women do, and until he has four to a straight on the board he doesn't look at his down card. Hubert's defenses having been suitably weakened, Buddy then raises his friend more than he can afford to lose.

The use of Tomey's Turl as dealer and the possibility that he has stacked the deck—which Faulkner at Virginia insisted is a certainty—does many things. It makes the apocryphal tale of Buddy's victory more plausible, strengthening the force of his bet and keeping Hubert from looking foolish not to call. It reintegrates the two plots of the story and gives Turl, who was so firmly in charge at first, a controlling voice in the outcome, reminding us that the white men and their game are not sovereign. Through Hubert's query, "Who dealt these cards?" Faulkner literally puts the spotlight on Tomey's Turl, to show how arbitrary is the color line and to reassert his theme of community:

> He reached out and tilted the lamp-shade, the light moving up Tomey's Turl's arms that were supposed to be black but were not quite white, up his Sunday shirt that was supposed to be white but wasn't quite either, that he put on every time he ran away just as uncle Buck put on the necktie each time he went to bring him back, and on to his face; and Mr. Hubert sat there, holding the lamp-shade and looking at Tomey's Turl. Then he tilted the shade back down and took up his cards and turned them face-down and pushed them toward the middle of the table. "I pass, Amodeus," he said.

The passage is kin to all those outraged protestations of Faulkner's heroes at their fate, but there is a gesture of submission these men cannot make. In the lost world of "Was," one of Southern literature's convincing affirmations of the past, the bonds between men outweigh the forces of conflict.

The coda is efficient and brief. The ride home of the McCaslins, Tennie now accompanying them, combines the marriage procession of comedy with the successful completion of the quest. Life is an irresistible circle which leaves us almost where we began, and the addition of Tennie stabilizes the situation for the future. The dogs chase the fox in the house as at the beginning of the tale, but in a way that reca-

pitulates what has happened at Warwick—this time the dog, old Moses, gets caught in the fox's box and Uncle Buddy has to kick it off him. Again the note is of much ado about nothing, "A fine race . . . but the tree was too quick." Faulkner may be making a judgment on life, but he also invites the reader to applaud the tale and be sorry it's over.

The explosion of damns from the twins is a comic release of whatever tensions may remain, a puncturing of the balloon of the story. Buck's final "Damn the fox . . . It seems to me I've been away from home a whole damn month" allows for all that has been crammed into the time "Was" took to read. It is also a seemingly effortless and spontaneous expression of every man's relief and gratitude to be home. Compared to the "you can't go home again" of Wolfe, whom Faulkner so admired, it shows the writer's confident and stubborn assertion of his roots. Again the parallel is to *Light in August*, which concludes with Lena's "My, my. A body does get around. Here we ain't been coming from Alabama but two months, and now it's already Tennessee." The suspension of time for which Faulkner aims depends on the profound knowledge of place; and if the people and society in "Was" are doomed not to "endure and prevail," the image of their life remains.

PANTHEA REID BROUGHTON

Requiem for a Nun: *No Part in Rationality*

ONLY ONE NOVEL written by William Faulkner is not today available in a paperback or relatively inexpensive Modern Library edition. That novel is Faulkner's fifteenth, *Requiem for a Nun* (1951). Publishers have never considered the book an especially marketable product; the public has found it a baffling, piecemeal work; critics have considered its role as sequel to *Sanctuary*, but have denied the novel the careful scrutiny it deserves in its own right. They have dismissed it as an inept experiment, a tiresomely strained attempt to embody the ideals of the Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech in a book which could properly be called neither novel nor drama. And they have concluded that *Requiem for a Nun*'s absurdly unconventional form embodies only a conventional Faulknerian sermon. There is something fundamentally contradictory, however, about the assumption that Faulkner would use the daringly unconventional structure of *Requiem* to make conventional statement. I would suggest that, on the contrary, structure and meaning are here, as elsewhere in Faulkner, organically interrelated, that in fact the novel's structure itself is a metaphorical expression of the novel's central awareness.

There are three sections or "acts" in *Requiem*: "Act One: The

Courthouse (A Name for the City)"; "Act Two: The Golden Dome (Beginning was the Word)"; and "Act Three: The Jail (Nor Even Yet Quite Relinquish—)"; each includes a long historical narrative followed by an act of drama. The dramatic sections themselves have been lifted from the work and staged without notable success, partially because Faulkner did not manage the dramatic as well as he did the narrative form; though, also, the drama alone seems bare and skeletal without the rich contrapuntal effect of the historical preambles. Both are essential; for just as the diffuse poetic prose of the narrative sections and the terse stripped dialogue of the drama present two approaches to art, the novel as a whole deals with two approaches to life: the mystic and the rational.

Requiem's opening pages clearly establish the two approaches. In "Act One: The Courthouse" the settlers, on the one hand, grant to the courthouse a mystic symbolic identity, while an outlander views it, on the other hand, as a mere building, at best a convenient means for procuring funds from the federal government. As a symbol of the Idea of Community the courthouse has power to transform an amorphous frontier settlement into a confederation of men. Building the courthouse, the settlers worked

> as one because it was theirs, bigger than any because it was the sum of all and, being the sum of all, it must raise all of their hopes and aspirations level with its own aspirant and soaring cupola, so that, sweating and tireless and unflagging, they would look about at one another a little shyly, a little amazed, with something like humility too, as if they were realizing, or were for a moment at least capable of believing, that men, all men, including themselves, were a little better, purer maybe even, than they had thought, expected, or even needed to be. Though they were still having a little trouble with Ratcliffe; the money. . . .

Ratcliffe is the rational, pragmatic man. He sees the establishment of a town only as an opportunity, the building of a courthouse only as a lever, to extract payment from the federal government. To repay old Alec Holston for the lost fifteen-pound lock he had loaned the township, Ratcliffe presents a solution

> which not only solved the problem but abolished it; and not just

> that one, but all problems, from now on into perpetuity, opening to their vision like the rending of a veil, like a glorious prophecy, the vast splendid limitless panorama of America: that land of boundless opportunity, that bourne, created not by nor of the people, but for the people, as was the heavenly manna of old, with no return demand on man save the chewing and swallowing since out of its own matchless Allgood it would create produce train support and perpetuate a race of laborers dedicated to the single purpose of picking the manna up and putting it into his lax hand or even between his jaws—illimitable, vast, without beginning or end, not even a trade or a craft but a beneficence as are sunlight and rain and air, inalienable and immutable.
>
> "Put it on the Book," Ratcliffe said—the Book: not a ledger, but *the* ledger . . . .

Ratcliffe's solution is to register the lost lock as anything, perhaps axle grease, in the ledger of Indian affairs, letting payment from the United States for fifteen dollars worth of "axle grease" go to repay Holston: ". . . it was the United States itself which had voluntarily offered to show them how to transmute the inevictable lock into proofless and ephemeral axle grease . . . as though the United States had said, 'Please accept a gift of fifteen dollars' (the town had actually paid old Alec fifteen dollars for the lock; he would accept no more)." Making the money up out of their own pockets, the townsmen refuse to accept Ratcliffe's easy way out. That Ratcliffe is assumed by most critics to represent individualism simply because his voice is "alien and unreconciled" indicates appalling inattention to just what it is that Ratcliffe recommends: graft. The long passage quoted above should make it clear that Faulkner feels accepting an unearned "beneficence," having merely to pick up the preferred manna, is an "Allgood" that can result only in human laxity and ineptitude.

Indeed, the values of independence and responsibility do not reside, in this case, with the individual, but rather with the community; for Faulkner presents the emerging town of Jefferson as a society of men organizing themselves specifically in order that individual liberty will not be threatened. To them, in fact, government means no more than "respect without servility, allegiance without abasement to the government which they had helped to found and had accepted with pride but

still as free men, still free to withdraw from it at any moment when the two of them found themselves no longer compatible." Theirs is a "free government of free men too, so long as the government remembered to let men live free, not under it but beside it." Such an attitude may sound like an untenable defense of the southern states' right to secede, but, popular or not, it is in the book. As Richard P. Adams remarks, "Confronted with what Faulkner explicitly said, and sometimes tediously repeated, the critics have not always been able to believe that he really meant it."[1] Individualism is valued here as elsewhere in the Faulkner canon; but in *Requiem for a Nun* it is the group which preserves individual liberty, the loner who would destroy it. It is Ratcliffe[2] who can understand no aim except money; it is his type whose vision of government may be rendered in a mathematical formula: "profit plus regimen equals security." And it is unmistakably William Faulkner who is outraged over such readiness to relinquish individual responsibility in order to buy a little security.

The first narrative section of *Requiem for a Nun* then presents "government" as an abstract concept with potential for either ennobling or enfeebling mankind. If he uses the abstract idea merely for leverage, merely as a rational expedient for absolving the self of responsibility (as Ratcliffe would recommend) then man allows the abstraction to devitalize his existence. If, on the other hand, his private and material and expedient concerns are set aside and the abstraction is approached mythically, then man opens himself to the transforming power of the abstract concept. When, for example, the townsmen abandon their personal identities to work as one, they find their effort transubstantiated so that the whole becomes more than the sum of its parts. Such a mythic

[1] *Faulkner: Myth and Motion* (Princeton, 1968), pp. 130-31.

[2] That value rests with the community rather than with the "alien" individual goes so much against the grain of preconceived interpretations that Walker Brylowski fails to notice that it is Ratcliffe, not the federal agent, who suggests the graft. *Faulkner's Olympian Laugh: Myth in the Novels* (Detroit, 1968), p. 174. In the manuscript collection at the University of Virginia, several pages of carbon typescript of *Requiem for a Nun* explicitly establish Ratcliffe's materialism. Faulkner, for instance, explained that Ratcliffe "was still unshakably convinced that Pettigrew's aim was a material one." Such passages were omitted, I assume, because the point did not need, from Faulkner's point of view, belaboring. See the Miscellaneous Carbon Typescript, page 24.

experience, coming as it does early in the book, sets the pattern for the novel's recurring emphasis on that which defies rational explanation.

Such supra-rationalism pervades each of the historical preambles. Each preamble is in fact intended, as Faulkner explained at the University of Virginia, to seem "a little mystical," especially when juxtaposed for "contrapuntal effect" against the "hard give-and-take of the dialogue" in the dramatic sections. For the overall effect of the narrative preambles in *Requiem* is to establish a mystical understanding of causation and of time, an understanding beyond the confines of the factual or empiric account. These historical sections of the novel establish that events transpire in defiance of logic. The mystic power of the symbol to transform man's efforts is inexplicable. So too is the inviolable permanence of the symbol; for the Idea of Community cannot be destroyed even if the building which houses it is burnt to the ground. Faulkner insists that the design or idea of courthouse and town is "irrevocable"; it cannot be changed " 'in the name of what you will call progress.' " Like the pigeons and sparrows in its belfry, the courthouse endures "centennial and serene." Faulkner clearly describes the persistence of the actual building of brick and board as contingent upon its status as symbol: it is "harder than axes, tougher than fire, more fixed than dynamite," "tougher than dynamite and fire, because it was the symbol: the County and the City." Mere logic cannot explain why, in a world dizzy with change, the symbol is permanent and inviolable; its endurance is a mystical phenomenon beyond rational explanation.

Requiem's second mythic section is entitled "The Golden Dome." Like the county courthouse, the dome of the state capitol in Jackson, Mississippi, symbolizes a lawful and orderly confederation of men. Faulkner presents the days of anarchic freedom as necessarily past; the pioneer himself—"innocent and gullible, without bowels for avarice or compassion or forethought either, changing the face of the earth: felling a tree which took two hundred years to grow, in order to extract from it a bear or a capful of wild honey"—is obsolete now. After "turning the earth into a howling waste" he must disappear because "only the wilderness could feed and nourish him," and he has destroyed it. The pioneer's brand of freedom was egocentric, anarchic, without forethought. Faulk-

ner depicts his demise without regret, implying that order and control are necessary to limit just such an irresponsible notion of freedom. Man can no longer afford to live in wasteful "tomorrowless days." He establishes his governments to limit and control excess so that his tomorrows will be better than his todays.

The full title of the second section of *Requiem for a Nun* is "The Golden Dome (Beginning was the Word)." Faulkner explained to his publisher, "What I wanted here was to paraphrase Eliot,"[3] specifically "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service." The association, I take it, is that Eliot contrasts the beginning, the word "Superfetation of γσξ," with Sweeney shifting "from ham to ham/ Stirring the water in his bath," and Faulkner contrasts the Word, the Idea of Commonwealth, with actual vulgarities. The difference, apparently, is that while Eliot deplores man's unresponsiveness and his vulgarization of myth, Faulkner accepts the inevitable inadequacies of man's response.

He includes in *Requiem for a Nun* a travelogue description of Jackson, Mississippi, which presents the city as a mundane, vulgar place with its 201,092 people, its four railroads, seven bus lines, two radio stations, and such "Diversions: chronic" as the "Junior Auxiliary Style Show" and "Diversions: acute:" as "Religion, Politics." But yet the city is, nevertheless, the abode of the ideal. Its capitol may seem "the golden dome, the knob, the gleamy crumb, the gilded Pustule"; it may in fact be only a "knob" or a "pimple-dome," but the dome remains, nevertheless, as the "gilded crumb of man's eternal aspirations." As symbol of the unattainable ideal the dome remains "more durable than the ice and the pre-night cold, soaring, hanging as one blinding spheroid above the center of the Commonwealth, incapable of being either looked full or evaded, peremptory, irrefragible [*sic*], and reassuring." Although present vulgarities in Jackson fall woefully short of the ideal, the ideal symbolized in the dome does, nevertheless, persist.

Symbols are, in fact, supremely valuable to man precisely because they are by definition beyond his achievement, though not above his aspiration. Speaking of the symbol of utopia, Earnest Cassirer explains, "The great mission of the Utopia is to make room for the possible as opposed

[3] James B. Meriwether, *The Literary Career of William Faulkner* (Princeton, 1961), p. 36.

to a passive acquiescence in the present actual state of affairs. It is symbolic thought which overcomes the natural inertia of man and endows him with a new ability, the ability constantly to reshape his human universe."[4] Similarly, Faulkner presents the symbol as "Idea risen now, suspended like a balloon or a portent or a thundercloud above what used to be wilderness, drawing, holding the eyes of all: Mississippi: a state, a commonwealth. . . ." When the pioneers conceived the Idea of Commonwealth "something happened to them"; the Idea is "beacon, focus, and lodestar" for them to establish "in the wilderness a point for men to rally to in conscience and free will."

Such a presentation of the transforming power of the Idea defies empirical analysis; and so too does the presentation of Time in *Requiem for a Nun*, where future aspirations have actual causative influence, and past time persists as an actual element in the present. Faulkner, in fact, directly contradicts what Alfred North Whitehead calls David Hume's "extraordinarily naïve assumption of time as pure succession."[5] With Hume, to use Santayana's phrase, there is only the solipsism of the present moment. Faulkner, on the other hand, feels that the present moment exists at the interface of past and future and that neither is more real than the other.

Explaining the philosophy of Henri Bergson, T. E. Hulme writes "the whole of your past life is in the present."[6] Faulkner who in a 1952 interview acknowledged being influenced "by Bergson, obviously" writes from a similar point of view. As his Gavin Stevens explains, "The past is never dead. It's not even past." Anti-empirical notions of time pervade *Requiem*, but the concept of duration is focused upon almost explicitly in the third section. There the old jail is presented as symbol of "man's incredible and enduring *Was*." It represents "that thin durable continuity . . . that steadfast and durable and unhurryable continuity against or across which the vain and glittering ephemerae of progress and alteration washed in substanceless repetitive evanescent scarless waves." The jail is unaffected by progress partially because progress is

[4] *An Essay on Man* (New York, 1970), p. 68.
[5] *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect* (New York, 1958), p. 34.
[6] *Speculations* (New York, 1967), p. 201.

"substanceless," but also because the jail is cut off physically from the frantic rebuilding of Jefferson: "tideless in that backwash, insulated by that city block of space from the turmoil of the town's birthing." Faulkner repeatedly associates the jail with the cul de sac or backwater image. While the courthouse survived burning by Federal troops because, as symbol, it was "tougher than fire," the jail "escaped, untouched, insulated by its windless backwater from fire; and now the town was as though insulated by fire or perhaps cauterized by fire from fury and turmoil."

Karl Zink suggests that there is "possible irony, of course, in the fact that the values the jail holds 'suspended' in its old walls were preserved by a kind of stagnation, a resistance to the principle of change."[7] Such an interpretation results, I suspect, from an overemphasis upon the importance of motion and change in Faulkner's fiction. It is not ironic but necessarily true that values persist most effectively when bypassed by the tide of change. Survival necessitates stagnation no more than change necessitates progress. The persistence of the past is, in fact, an essential element in the substance of the future. When even "the last forest tree" has been felled and "replaced by formal synthetic shrubs contrived and schooled in Wisconsin greenhouses"; when even the very air is "no more Yoknapatawpha's air nor even Mason and Dixon's air, but America's"; and when "one nation, indivisible" means only "the babbling pressure to buy and buy and still buy arriving more instantaneous than light, two thousand miles from New York and Los Angeles"; then it is not ironic but natural that value should reside in those things which persist from the past.

Faulkner's point about the new American homogeneity is that it is substanceless. It reflects the actualization of all that Ratcliffe over one hundred years before had hoped to get from the state. Now government is "founded on the working premise of being primarily an asylum for ineptitude and indigence." The city fathers have been replaced by a "courthouse and city hall gang . . . based on the pattern of Chicago and Kansas City and Boston and Philadelphia . . . which every three

[7] "Flux and the Frozen Moment: the Imagery of Stasis in Faulkner's Prose," PMLA, LXXI (June 1956), p. 290.

or four years would try again to raze the old courthouse in order to build a new one, not that they did not like the old one nor wanted the new, but because the new one would bring into the town and county that much more increment of unearned federal money." The jail, the town, and, by implication, the South have an advantage in being somewhat outside the current of progress and uniformity. That is, the persistence of the past is not obscured; in the South its power to shape and transform the present is at least allowed. In fact, it is only because the South is outside the mainstream of American pragmatic and rationalistic thought that a still-vital sense of mystery, of self-sufficiency, and of the past can persist there.

The three historical chronicles in *Requiem* establish that the course of history eludes logical analysis. It is shaped by the persistence of the past and by the symbols which, embodying man's future aspirations, represent the realm of possibilities. Man may deny value to past or future, he may approach such symbols as the State as merely utilitarian tools for his own ends, but he does so at the expense of the vitality and richness of his own civilization. Faulkner, like Bergson, seems to think there are two ways by which we may get outside ourselves: we may move down to homogeneity, repetition, and materiality, or up to a "living moving eternity."[8] Apparently the vast pattern of American life represents a downward step. *Requiem for a Nun* reflects, however, Faulkner's increasing faith that it is possible to transcend the homogeneous, the material, and the rational and achieve a "living moving eternity."

That faith is evidenced through the stories of Nancy Mannigoe and Cecilia Farmer. In Section Three, Faulkner tells Cecilia's story as one "having no part in rationality." Cecilia was "a frail anemic girl with narrow workless hands." The daughter of the jailor, she seemed to do nothing but sit in "the bower framing a window [of the jail and to muse] as the town remembered it—year after year for what must have been three or four of them, inscribing at some moment the fragile and indelible signature of her meditation in one of the panes of it (the window): her frail and workless name, scratched by a diamond ring in her

[8] Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T. E. Hulme (New York, 1955), p. 49.

frail and workless hand, and the date: *Cecilia Farmer April 16th 1861.*" As a Confederate cavalry retreats through Jefferson, a soldier "gaunt and tattered, battle-grimed and fleeing and undefeated" and the "frail and useless girl musing in the blond mist of her hair beside the window pane" look "at one another for that moment across the fury and pell mell of battle." A year later, with the war's end, the soldier returns, marries her, puts her behind him on his mule and heads for Alabama before he has hardly looked at her a second time or had time to learn her middle name. Faulkner calls his return "a single-handed assault against what any rational man would have considered insurmountable odds" and explains that the "bubble" of a dream "had ever been immune to the ephemerae of facts."

Cecilia represents "that passivity, that stasis, that invincible captaincy of soul which didn't even need to wait but simply to be, breathe tranquilly, and take food—infinite not only in capacity but in scope too: that face, one maiden muse which had drawn a man out of the running pell mell of a cavalry battle . . . drawing him (that face) . . . back across the whole ruined land and the whole disastrous year by that virgin inevictable passivity more inescapable than lodestar." The image of Cecilia as static lodestar associates her with the courthouse which as static symbol of Community drew the men out of themselves into a cooperative vision. Just as the courthouse as symbol was imperishable, so Cecilia, "drawing the substance—the will and the hope and dream and imagination—of all men," transcends time.

The second part of the Cecilia Farmer story takes place around 1950. Faulkner addresses his reader as "you, a stranger, an outlander say from the East or the North or the Far West" who might come to Jefferson "out of frank curiosity, to try to learn, comprehend, understand what had brought your cousin or friend or acquaintance to elect to live here." The stranger might be shown the old window-pane "bearing a few faint scratches apparently no more durable than the thin dried slime left by the passage of a snail, yet which has endured a hundred years."

Seeing the window-pane and hearing Cecilia's story, the stranger has an experience which transcends time and the limits of the five senses.

His apprehension seems "actually to have entered into another sense than vision" and suddenly there is "no time: no space: no distance." The stranger hears Cecilia's voice murmuring "from the long long time ago: *'Listen, stranger: this was myself: this was I.'*" The experience illustrates Bergson's intuition or Whitehead's prehension: to Faulkner it is evidence of how vast, how "limitless in capacity is man's imagination to disperse and burn away the rubble-dross of fact and probability, leaving only truth and dream." Having "no part in rationality" the Cecilia Farmer story prepares us for Nancy Mannigoe's story, which is to be approached only through a qualification of the logical and rational faculties.

The mystic historical preambles serve as introductions to three acts of a play whose settings are the courthouse, the capitol, and the jail. Nancy Mannigoe, pleading guilty, is condemned to die for the murder of the Gowan Stevens' child. When the judge urges God to have mercy on her soul, Nancy makes an "unheard-of violation of procedure" by agreeing "Yes, Lord." Thereafter, Gavin Stevens, Nancy's lawyer, attempts to goad the bereaved mother (Temple Drake eight years after *Sanctuary*) into truth. He does so with a midnight trip to the governor, on the pretense of saving Nancy. But Nancy is ready to die. Temple must speak the truth not for Nancy but for herself, not to the governor, but to her husband. All this is managed rather theatrically with Gowan stepping into the governor's chair at the crucial moment; but our concern is not so much with Faulkner's stagecraft as with his balancing of theme and medium.

Temple's problem is that she cannot break from a merely rationalistic mode of thinking. That she must confess simply for the sake of Truth alone is incomprehensible to Temple. She queries "in quiet amazement," "For no more than that. For no better reason than that. Just to get it told, breathed aloud, into words, sound," but she remains incredulous. Thus, although she knows from the beginning that there is no real hope of saving Nancy and, indeed, that Gavin has another objective in the first place, she still clings to the illusion that her confession is for Nancy's sake. Joseph Gold fails to see that. He accuses Faulkner of "still unbelievably [attempting at the book's end] to sustain the

narrative illusion that he forsook two hundred pages earlier."[9] But the attempt to save Nancy was not a narrative illusion, it was solely a personal one. Thus, Temple has to find out again and again that "all this was not for the sake of her soul because her soul doesn't need it, but for mine."

Her incredulity results from her basically pragmatic frame of mind, one which values truth only if it is useful. Temple and her husband have a wholly rational perspective toward morality. They conceive of human accountability as if it were a credit and balance sheet on which the debts of sin might be balanced and erased by a proportionate amount of suffering. Temple asks, "Why can't you buy back your own sins with your own agony?" Gowan talks bitterly of *paying* with his "bachelor-freedom" and "man's self-respect in the chastity of his wife" for something his wife didn't even regret. And Temple speaks of their marriage as being worth to Gowan, "Less than he paid for it." The absurdity and horror of reducing human ethical and emotional ties to a mathematical tally is most vividly rendered in the Act I exchange between Gowan and lawyer Stevens:

GOWAN

I got a cut rate. I had two children. I had to pay only one of them to find out it wasn't really costing me anything—Half price: a child, and a dope-fiend nigger whore on a public gallows: that's all I had to pay for immunity.

STEVENS

There's no such thing.

GOWAN

From the past. From my folly. My drunkenness. My cowardice, if you like—

STEVENS

There's no such thing as past either.

Temple and Gowan must come to realize that neither human lives nor human accountability can be tallied on a ledger sheet. Immunity

[9] *William Faulkner: A Study in Humanism: From Metaphor to Discourse* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1966), p. 96.

cannot be bought; the past cannot be evaded. Temple remembers a book by "Hemingway, wasn't it? . . . about how it had never actually happened to a gir—woman, if she just refused to accept it." Maria's option in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is not open to any Faulkner character, anywhere. The past may never merely be denied or dismissed. As Gavin Stevens reminds Temple, at any time the past may "foreclose on you without warning." Thus Mrs. Gowan Stevens must acknowledge and accept her past as Temple Drake before she can come to any satisfactory present existence or to any real preparation for "tomorrow and tomorrow, and tomorrow."

Temple must transcend the solipsism of the present moment. Her powers of rationalization may not simply deny her past as Temple Drake, nor can mathematical computations total up a neat moral balance. Temple must abandon such rational oversimplifications and accept the full responsibility for living in time, with responsibility. She must recognize, as Olga Vickery explains, that "man's ethical responsibility is a necessity and not a contingency."[10] To do so she must adopt something of the supra-rational faith of Nancy who instructs her to just "Believe." She must adopt, in short, a mythic mode of thought.

Such a mode of thinking which transcends reason is essentially foreign to Temple. A rational and pragmatic twentieth-century American, she can hardly conceive of telling the truth unless for practical ends. Her bafflement from the play's beginning results from realizing that Nancy sacrificed her own life for no better reason than to save Temple's. Temple can imagine no reason for selflessness; as she puts it "Maybe it wouldn't be so hard if I could just understand why they don't stink—what reason they would have for not stinking." That Nancy smothered Temple's baby, willingly sending herself to the gallows in order to save Temple, Gowan, and the other child, is difficult for most readers to accept. But to try to find logic in Nancy's deed or to tally up deaths against lives is to miss the point. However difficult it is for us to comprehend, Nancy believes in an afterlife for herself and the baby. She sacrifices herself and the child, after trying everything else, in order to

[10] *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Baton Rouge, 1964), p. 123.

shock Temple out of abandoning her family for a lover, to prevent her from regressing into the Temple Drake of *Sanctuary*.

Just as, in the prose preamble to the last act, Cecilia Farmer's just *being* burst the confines of time, space, and logic, so too in Act III, Nancy's just *believing* bursts the structure of law and reason. Her behavior presents a challenge to Temple to break from the rational-empiric mode, from merely doing her "best according to [a] code" to accepting a mystical involvement with God and the whole race of men, throughout all time. Temple finds it hard to conceive of such a commitment without guaranteed results; she questions Nancy, "And suppose tomorrow and tomorrow, and then nobody there, nobody waiting to forgive me—." Nancy answers simply, "Believe." But again Temple queries, "Believe what, Nancy? Tell me." And again as she exits, Nancy answers, "Believe."

The play and the book end with this challenge. Whether Temple meets the challenge we do not know. But we cannot balance Temple's worth against Nancy's and thereby determine if Temple merited the sacrifice. For the very point of the book is that logic and reason are not always relevant, certainly not here.

Reasonable critics have been reluctant to take seriously the unreasonable assumptions which form the thematic matrix of *Requiem for a Nun*. They have talked of improbable circumstance and poorly motivated action, when Faulkner himself dismissed the "rubble-dross of fact and probability" for an understanding which transcends the confines of reason. Faulkner's fifteenth novel, and much of the later fiction along with it, in fact evidences a mystical sense of human illimitability. Dismissing the "ephemerae of facts," Faulkner in *Requiem for a Nun* achieves a vision of transcendence inaccessible to the merely rational mind, apprehensible only to the mythic consciousness. Pretending in this book to "no part in rationality," Faulkner challenges the reader to also transcend the particular, the material, and the rational and to experience an expanded sense of *being* which is itself beyond reason.

ANDREW H. PFEIFFER

Eye of the Storm: The Observers' Image of the Man Who Was Faulkner

IN THE STUDY of literature the bifurcation of the artist and the man behind the work of art is always a complex and often a paradoxical problem for the critic or reader. The literary biographer surveys the life and times of the writer, often underplaying the less definable qualities of artistic creativity; the New Critic scours the texts and is much less concerned with the character of the author. With a Hemingway or a Wolfe the man and the artist merge to a high degree in the autobiographical nature of their fiction, and the study of biography and literature throws a reciprocal light one upon the other. In the case of William Faulkner, however, the man and the artist—the public and the private figures—are less obviously reconciled.[1]

Michael Millgate, author of one of the three most important critical studies of Faulkner's fiction, which also includes the most extensive biographical study of Faulkner to date, notes the dilemma of "the ap-

[1] For a perceptive essay analyzing Faulkner as artist and as political polemicist based on the thesis that the same qualities that made Faulkner successful as an artist made him a failure as a political voice, see Walter Taylor, "Faulkner: Social Commitment and Artistic Temperament," *Southern Review*, VI (October, 1970), 1075-92.

parent dichotomy between the man and the artist." His solution is to accept the Keatsian concept of "negative capability," which he defines as

> the idea that the artist, when engaged in the creative act, is not a powerful personality impressing that personality, his own stamp, on the material with which he deals, but rather a shifting, flexible, protean consciousness responsible in infinitely various ways to the needs of theme and subject.

Thus Millgate concludes that a Faulkner biography may be of relatively little value because the " 'exterior' events of his life . . . may well seem insignificant beside the intensity of his secret 'internal' life."[2]

Millgate's theory may well prove true: on a less aesthetic level, Faulkner's nephew, Jimmy, recently noted that writers keep coming to Oxford to study the artifacts of Faulkner. They are still trying to find clues to the man behind the art: "Each one pumps me as if *he* will learn the Big Secret," Jimmy complains, [but] "there ain't any."[3] Yet despite these two rational views, observers of Faulkner, curious and/or scholarly, come not only to Faulkner's works, but also to his town and his house looking for the secret.

The quest to comprehend Faulkner the man, apart or correlated to his fiction, has gone on for nearly half a century and the study of the impressions of the observers of Faulkner is of interest for both curious and scholarly reasons, for it reveals something of the man and something of the enigma he became in his own lifetime. Many people, with or without literary training, have tried to verbalize their responses upon meeting Faulkner. Their recorded impressions, while similar in many ways, are often contradictory and sometimes even antithetical within a single impression.

In trying to define him, the Faulkner-watchers seem to picture him in their minds as a mythical, larger-than-life storyteller. He was a raconteur of sorts like his character Ratliff, though he lacked the Yoknapataw-

[2] Michael Millgate, "William Faulkner, Cadet," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, XXXV (January, 1966), p. 127. The application of the concept of "negative capability" is also discussed in a somewhat different context—by Taylor, "Faulkner," pp. 1079, 1092.

[3] Quoted by Larry L. King, "Requiem for Faulkner's Home Town," *Holiday*, XLV (March, 1969), p. 75.

phan's extroverted geniality. Therefore, Lewis Leary describes William Faulkner this way:

> He often sounds as if he were speaking from the depths of a great chair set before an open fire, with glass in hand and friends around him, all comfortable and a little sleepy, oblivious of time and the necessity for hurry. His voice drones on, lavishly and discursively, as he elaborates on familiar twice-told tales.[4]

Such a scene may have occurred, though Faulkner the storyteller usually played such a role only on his hunting trips with his fellow Oxfordians. Then he told stories not so much because he was a literary man as because the campfire story was part of the oral tradition of the hunters, as it is in Major de Spain's camp in "The Bear." Leary's mythic man squares more with a Ratliff discursing on Snopeslore or a Grandfather Compson telling the oft-told Sutpen story rather than Faulkner the man, who was less the central figure of a group than Leary's teller of the tale. Faulkner's contemporaries, such as his fellow screenwriters in Hollywood, noted his seemingly infinite silences when in a group.[5] Thus Leary's solution to the dichotomy of Faulkner, the man and the artist, is to merge the two into a shadowy bardic figure of centuries past.

In what is generally considered the most perceptive impression of Faulkner, Madeleine Chapsal (who observed both Faulkner and the Faulkner-watchers at a publisher's party in Paris) portrays him as a rather reticent literary lion trapped by the predatory public in "one of the famous secret gardens of Paris." The author arrived alone, conversed well—albeit with the aid of a bourbon—with a woman who seemed not to threaten him. Later a socialite out "to put a few questions to our dear, our great Faulkner," ventured into the garden and quickly returned from her encounter: "'It's cold out there beneath the trees,' she said. Her voice was not the same."[6] Here, again, the observer was struck by

[4] Lewis Leary, "Introduction," *Crowell's Handbook of Faulkner*, edited by Dorothy Tuck (New York, 1964), p. xv. This article is, overall, one of the best attempts at defining the essence of Faulkner, man and artist.

[5] Joseph L. Blotner, "Faulkner in Hollywood," in *Man and the Movies*, edited by W. R. Robinson and George Garrett (Baton Rouge, 1967), p. 284.

[6] Madeleine Chapsal, "A Lion in the Garden," *The Reporter*, XIII (November 13, 1955), p. 40.

the dichotomy of Faulkner, the man and the artist, as she stalked the enigmatic lion in the garden. While Faulkner was shaken by the whole evening in public, the socialite was chilled because Faulkner did not measure up to the image she had of him.

Thomas D. Clark, the historian, who had labored as a greenskeeper with young Faulkner, reminisced that Faulkner was, "it seemed to me, disjointedly in love with his fellow man and blithely indifferent to them as individuals."[7] Thus Faulkner's work manifested great feeling for humanity, but the man was aloof and less responsive than his audience preferred—much like another Southerner of noble appearance and enigmatic greatness, Woodrow Wilson. Faulkner proved to be enigmatic because his vitality did not come through at the initial observance. His audience awaited genius and expected to *see* it in his appearance—his physique, dress, manners, and actions. Recalling Faulkner's return to Hollywood in 1942, the woman then heading the stenographic pool at Warner Brothers Studios simply and directly defines the dilemma of the Faulkner-watcher. She states: "We had heard that he was coming. . . . When we saw this little man, quiet, and grey, who was sweet and kind and soft-spoken, we said, '*This* is a *talent*?' "[8]

This reaction, the natural response of a Hollywood figure to someone lacking the stereotypical flamboyance of the practitioners of the plastic arts of the movies, is simply more direct than the wonderment scholar and casual observer alike have held toward the novelist who proclaimed he was just a farmer. Basically, most observers, struck by the divergence between the expectation and the confrontation, were unconsciously asking themselves when faced with Faulkner, "This is a talent?"

The problem lies in trying to plumb the depths (or sometimes merely the surface) of a man of many masks, for Faulkner legends arose during his long career because of the myths about his biography that he himself helped fabricate, and because of his intense private solitude with its accompanying public façade of simplicity and disdain for recognition. The masks Faulkner wore made him appear paradoxical and enigmatic to

[7] Thomas D. Clark, "The Greenskeeper," in *William Faulkner of Oxford*, edited by James W. Webb and A. Wigfall Green (Baton Rouge, 1965), p. 76.

[8] Quoted in Blotner, "Faulkner in Hollywood," pp. 280-81.

his champions and Janus-faced to his antagonists. There was Faulkner the legendary Anti-Intellectual: the non-working Count "No-'Count," who postured a post-world War I nobility; the hunter turning down a visit by a foreign noblewoman to keep a coon-hunting date; the Rabelaisian drinker once quoted as stating that civilization started with distillation—the "sot-in-his-ways-Mississippian." There was Faulkner the Oxfordian: the Mississippian who could be courteous or rude, noble or crude; the scoutmaster, air-raid warden, carpenter, and farmer who also was a neo-Oxfordian resembling an English nobleman, tweedy and aloof in a bowler hat. There was Faulkner the Southerner, too liberal for his neighbors, too moderate for the Northern liberal, possessing a love-hate relationship for his South like Quentin Compson, simultaneously identifying with elements of the past and trying to keep up with changes—and thus update tradition to rebuild a new South with a future as well a past.[9]

These masks confused and tantalized the Faulkner-watchers, wary of their prey and often self-consciously aware of his detachment from *their* devotion to their hunt. His friend and neighbor Robert Coughlan noted the seemingly irreconcilable elements of Faulkner's personality:

> He is a philosopher at large who has no integrated philosophy; he loves the South and feels revulsion for the South; he is a self-effacing but vain man who longed for recognition and rebuffed it when it came; a man of integrity who has contributed to a false legend about himself.[10]

It may be difficult to define what manner of man Faulkner was because of the masks he wore, but we can see what manner of man he appeared to be to the host of observers who have commented on the

[9] The categories of masks suggested in part by Hodding Carter, "William Faulkner: the Man, the Writer, the Legend," New York *Herald Tribune Books*, XXXVIII (July 15, 1962), pp. 4-5. Note that Carter says Faulkner was shot down in France in World War I, an incident long since proven to be mere legend. See also the introduction to the collection of interviews given by Faulkner in *Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner, 1926-1962*, edited by James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (New York, 1968), pp. x-xii.

[10] Robert Coughlan, *The Private World of William Faulkner* (New York, 1954), p. 25.

man.[11] All observers agree that—for a literary genius, at least—Faulkner was small of stature: he was very small, thin, delicately built, frail, slight, little, diminutive. However, there are qualifying comments: he was weak looking, but sturdily built; short, but with a strong character; small and spare, but fiercely erect. He was usually seen as handsome, composed, dignified, aristocratic—the image of the country squire that does come through in his photographs—though occasionally an interviewer notes a less dignified Faulkner: the farmer with dirt on his hands and boots or the unshaven domestic beer-maker in his kitchen.

The usual response was to expect Faulkner to look like an artist should look, then to find that at "first sight the man is not impressive,"[12] then to try to search out qualities within a man obviously small in size and demeanor. The observers note his dress: he almost always wore tweed outfits, despite the formality or informality of the occasion. Indeed, one Oxford native at his funeral told William Styron that it would not seem right if Faulkner were not buried in his tweed jacket![13] His tweeds puzzled his interviewers as they were often rough, patched, and scruffy, yet had been tastefully and neatly tailored—before they aged, so to speak. Thus while his clothes might seem "incongruous," the observer was able to reconcile their qualities beneath their appearance to that of the mental Faulkner they created. Even Simon Claxton, amazed at how scruffily dressed he appeared in "basically good clothes," found this appearance adaptable to a positive image.[14]

[11] The following material about the observers' impressions of Faulkner is culled from reminiscences and interviews. For the latter, see *Lion in the Garden*. In addition, sources from which comments and phrases are taken are: Millgate, "William Faulkner," pp. 122-23; and "Faulkner in Toronto: A Further Note," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, XXXVII (January, 1968), p. 198; Blotner, "Faulkner in Hollywood," pp. 261, 278, 284, 292; Hilda Nauman, "How Faulkner Went His Way and I Went Mine," *Esquire*, LXVIII (December, 1967), p. 173; Anthony Buttita, "William Faulkner: That Writin' Man of Oxford," *Saturday Review*, XVIII (May 21, 1938), p. 8; Emily Whitehurst Stone, "Faulkner Gets Started," *Texas Quarterly*, VIII (Winter, 1965), p. 148; Cleanth Brooks, "William Faulkner," in *The Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature*, edited by Max J. Herzberg (New York, 1962), p. 329; William Evans Stone V, "Our Cotehouse," in *William Faulkner of Oxford*, p. 73; Richard Gilman, "Faulkner's Yes and No," *Commonweal*, LXXVI (August 10, 1962), p. 449; Hodding Carter, "The Forgiven Faulkner," *Journal of Inter-American Studies*, VII (April, 1965), p. 138.

[12] Chapsal, "A Lion," p. 40.

[13] William Styron, "As He Lay Dead, a Bitter Grief," *Life*, LIII (July 20, 1962), p. 41

[14] Quotations from Stone, "Our Cotehouse," p. 78, and Claxton, *Lion in the Garden*, pp. 273-74.

Of some of the characteristics of Faulkner there is little dissent. His hair and moustache were always grey and meticulous to the beholder: his hair was well-brushed, neatly parted, impeccably trimmed, and always described as iron-grey, a very strong quality, indeed! His nose was always a hawk nose, seemingly a respectable and distinctive part of a set of the aquiline features of a noble Roman. His face was suitably described with adjectives that could easily be acquainted to a genius of the arts: it was a slender face of ruddy complexion, tanned and lined, with a set, serious expression; a face that was striking and photogenic, with a "well-bred, penetrating expression,"[15] a face in line with the masks of the Oxfordian, Mississippi, or English brand.

Along this line his voice, always described as soft, slow, or quiet, was accented by a tone variously called a Southern drawl or the speech of an educated Southerner—thus presumably less syrupy—or that of a forced English accent. Indeed, two of his fellow cadets at the Canadian air training center disagree distinctly about Faulkner's accent. Albert Monson remembers him always affecting a British accent, while J. M. Hinchley disagrees. Hinchley says Faulkner possessed a "rich Southern drawl" which, along with his suitcase labeled William Faulkner, Oxford, Mississippi (much like Ned William McCaslin Jefferson Mississippi, the tied-together name and place of one of the "reivers"), defined his identity in a foreign environment and made him conspicuous right away.[16] Therefore, the Faulkner-watchers not only wondered what manner of man their subject was, but also what manner of Oxfordian!

No matter how or by whom Faulkner was seen, the distinctive feature that almost always caught the observer's attention was Faulkner's eyes. His eyes seemed to hold the clue to the quality of the man, the link between the man and the artist, the key unlocking the masks. They were dark—usually seen as black, sometimes as dark brown or a combination of black and brown. Beneath the surface they were seen as alert, brilliant, brooding, burning, of a burning intensity, cruel, dark, deep-set, friendly, fine and dark, glittering, hooded, of lonely

[15] Loic Bouvard, *Lion in the Garden*, p. 69.

[16] The two former Canadian cadets are quoted in Millgate, "William Faulkner," p. 123, and "Faulkner in Toronto," p. 198. See Faulkner, *The Reivers: A Reminiscence* (New York, 1962), p. 173.

inner shadows, motionless, piercing, secretive, slow, sly, steady, and small, but all-seeing. The eyes seemed to take on a life of their own, like a mythopoeic configuration of Poe. Here under the "heavy eyebrows" and "epicanthic lids"[17] lay the eye before the storm, the clue to the external and internal Faulkner to the observer seeking to find out what manner of man Faulkner was.

The observers have, in some instances, gone beyond mere adjectives in describing the impact of the eyes of the genius upon the eyes of the beholder. One young man who made the pilgrimage to Oxford before World War II remembered, retrospectively, that when he telephoned Faulkner he could almost "feel those black, motionless eyes over the telephone wire."[18] A young would-be writer lunched with Faulkner and was obviously disappointed with his demeanor, but she was impressed by his burning eyes. Searching for a meaning within, she sensed "some kind of lonely inner shadows" behind the eyes. She added, "It was unsettling to be caught so unexpectedly in such eyes . . . [whose] intensity made me uncomfortable." Later, when Faulkner seemed tired and tried to take advantage of her, the woman noted that his eyes were now fireless. She seems to mean that she could in no way square her images of the man and the artist as the drowsy Faulkner who "lay still and white, very small in the swathing of the bedclothes," who did not fulfill the vision of greatness she had expected of him.[19] Claxton, while studying in America, noted Faulkner's casual and immobile appearance, then moved deeper into the description of his subject, Faulkner. He found him photogenic, "but when you look at him, you can't escape from those eyes. In a way they are friendly smiling eyes, in another they are cruel. One gets a different impression every time."[20]

Faulkner the man, indeed, did and will continue to impress different people in different ways. Faulkner as a public figure seems deceptively simple, yet enigmatically complex. He was not a loud public figure like Hemingway or Fitzgerald, continuously promoting themselves before the public's eye; yet contrary to some opinions, Faulkner,

[17] Bouvard and Cynthia Grenier, *Lion in the Garden*, pp. 69, 215.
[18] Dan Brennan, *Lion in the Garden*, p. 43.
[19] Nauman, "How Faulkner Went His Way," pp. 175, 175.
[20] Claxton, *Lion in the Garden*, p. 274.

too, was an "extra-literary legend" even in Hollywood, as Joseph Blotner has shown in a prelude to the authorized biography of William Faulkner.[21] He was, however, a profoundly private man, especially before the Nobel Prize. He avoided the public eye, often going out of his way to avoid reportorial visitations, disclaiming literary accolades, and even writing an essay defending privacy and attacking increasing American disrespect for personal and regional privacy.[22] His wife noted his intense desire for solitude as a craftsman almost four decades ago. Estelle Faulkner said: "There are times when Billy will go into his workroom and stay for hours. He hasn't any key, so he takes the door knob off and carries it inside with him. No one can get in and he is quite secure."[23]

That was Faulkner at home and at work; the public Faulkner executed a similar symbolic act. While the watchers fumbled for a key that was not there, Faulkner maintained his security by a deception as simple as that of removing a door knob: he remained quiet and let the observers build the legends and when the spirit moved him he contributed to that legend through his patented, simplistic, yet cryptic, responses from behind the mask of simple Oxfordian. For example, his fellow hunters tested their associate to see if the Nobel Prize had inflated the old hunter. Ike Roberts asked Faulkner, then washing dishes, what he would do if the Swedish ambassador delivered the prize money right there to the hunting camp. Faulkner allegedly answered: "I'd tell him just put it on that table over there and grab a dryin' rag and help out."[24]

The Nobel Prize, whether or not it impressed Faulkner, did solidify his fame. His French translator, Maurice Coindreau, recalled that "After

[21] W. M. Frohock, "William Faulkner: The Private Versus the Public Vision," *Southwest Review*, XXXIV (Summer, 1949), p. 281, makes the point about Faulkner not being an extra-literary legend. Frohock's revised view of Faulkner in *The Novel of Violence in America* (2nd ed., rev.; Dallas, 1957) drops the opening paragraph of the earlier study regarding Faulkner's public image. The revision is, perhaps significantly, subtitled merely "The Private Vision." For the Faulkner of Hollywood legend, see Blotner, "Faulkner in Hollywood," *passim*.

[22] Faulkner, "On Privacy: The American Dream: What Happened To It," *Harper's Magazine*," CCXI (July, 1955), pp. 33-38.

[23] Marshall Smith, *Lion in the Garden*, p. 26.

[24] Coughlan, *The Private World*, p. 134.

attaining fame, he raised even higher the wall behind which he sheltered . . . the dark secrets of Yoknapatawpha County and the ghosts of Jefferson with whom he kept company."[25] While it is true that Faulkner remained reticent about revealing his inner feelings and still usually was content to tell people what they wanted to hear, Coindreau's recollection again indicates how Faulkner legend overscores reality. By now, Faulkner's view of privacy has been institutionalized among the Faulkner legends, when, in fact, Faulkner was in the public eye frequently in his last decade.

During the 1950s, Faulkner toured Japan and other parts of the Far East as well as Europe, worked for the University of Virginia and set up a second home there, spoke and lectured at West Point and other places, and even worked in an aborted role as a goodwill ambassador as chairman of Eisenhower's People-to-People program.[26] For the most part, during this time he emphasized, reiterated, and expanded the theme of his Nobel Prize speech about the themes, aims, and future of man and artist. He still carried with him on his travels the old masks of Anti-Intellectual, Oxfordian, and Southerner and donned them on occasion out of habit, expectation, and perhaps sheer perversity, yet he added a new one: man with a message—about the universality of man and the verities, and about the issue of racial tensions in America. Faulkner the artist had long expounded this gospel in Yoknapatawpha, subtly in his masterpieces and more blatantly in the later lesser works like *Intruder in the Dust*. Faulkner the man late in life continued phrasing this message in the non-fiction medium.[27]

In conclusion, Faulkner the man must be seen as a congery of man, mask, message, and medium. Observers have grappled, in print, with his image for almost half a century now. With Faulkner dead the quest can no longer be a dialogue; the impressions can only be secondhand or

[25] Maurice Edgar Coindreau, "The Faulkner I Knew," *Shenandoah*, XVI (Winter, 1965), p. 31. Translated by James S. Patty.

[26] Blotner, "William Faulkner, Committee Chairman," *Themes and Directions in American Literature: Essays in Honor of Leon Howard*, edited by Ray B. Browne and Donald Pizer (Lafayette, Ind., 1969), pp. 200-19.

[27] Taylor, "Faulkner," p. 1076, says: "Few American authors of stature have subjected their social ideas to such examination outside the sanctuary of their imaginative works, or committed themselves more strongly to a political issue."

recollections, but the Faulkner monuments remain. The monuments to Faulkner the man include a marble gravestone simply marked FAULKNER, giving his name and date and a single quotation. The monuments to Faulkner the artist are, of course, the books he wrote. An editor friend of Faulkner's recalls his solitary venture at self-praise: "One day at my farm in The Berkshires he astonished me by running his finger along a shelf full of his books and saying: 'Not a bad monument for a man to leave behind him.' "[28]

Today people still visit—to Jimmy Faulkner's chagrin—the artifacts of the man: his town, his house, his study, even his grave. Critics still visit the artifacts of the artist: his letters, his manuscripts, his texts. Both look for the keys: through their own eyes they seek to define the qualities within the eye of the man, the storm of the artist. Faulkner's legacy is to be a multidimensional figure to a multilateral observer. Speaking of the multiple perspectives of *The Town*, Faulkner unconsciously defined his own fate: "Just as when you examine a monument you will walk around it, you are not satisfied to look at it from just one side."[29] The storm of the artist is stilled, the eyes of the man are closed, but the observer-critics will long gather around the monuments Faulkner left in his wake.

[28] King, "Requiem," p. 76.

[29] Robert N. Linscott, "Faulkner Without Fanfare," *Esquire*, LX (July, 1963), p. 36.

[30] Quoted in *Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at the University of Virginia, 1957-1958*, edited by Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (New York, 1965), p. 139.

ROBERT DUPREE

The Mirrors of Analogy: Three Poems of Allen Tate

Das Mittel, tote Formen zu erkennen, ist das mathematische Gesetz. Das Mittel, lebendige Formen zu verstehen, ist die Analogie.—Oswald Spengler

SPENGLER'S DISTINCTION between mathematical and analogical ways of knowing is quite prominent in Allen Tate's vision of modern man and his dilemmas. It reflects one of the central themes in Tate's writings: the contrast between modern man, who sees the world as a dead, inert structure of mathematically manipulable substances, and his ancestors, who knew a world of intricate relationships and analogies which linked far and near, past and present, in an organic whole. In particular, there are three poems—"The Cross," "The Last Days of Alice," and "The Mediterranean"—which explore the difference between merely perceiving (*erkennen*) lifeless units and truly understanding (*verstehen*) vital forms. What I shall attempt to do is use these three pieces as focal points in a broad look at Tate's analogical imagery.

"The Last Days of Alice" is explicitly concerned with analogy and what happens when man loses his ability to exercise it. Tate's choice of the heroine from *Through the Looking-Glass* becomes understandable

when we recall characters and scenes from both of the Alice books. One prominent figure in this bodiless world is the Cheshire Cat. When Alice asks, "Which way should I go?" he answers that it depends on where she wants to get to. "I don't care much where—," she begins, and before she can continue, he interrupts with, "Then it doesn't matter which way you go," leaving her to conclude with "*—so long as I get somewhere.*" "Oh, you're sure to do that if you only walk long enough," the Cheshire Cat rejoins. He is the total relativist, completely independent of the laws of the sensible world; a mathematical form and a pure Cartesian idea, he is beyond all human values and feelings in a world of merely "abstract rage." In his universe all are equally mad or sane: "We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."

The Cheshire Cat is, however, only part of the setting in Tate's poem. The little girl Alice is the central symbol of the abstract. She is constantly intent on having the last word or at least on retorting with a bright remark. Again and again she is overcome by mere animals and talking objects, who stifle her repartee and force her to mull over in silence "the spoiled cruelty she had meant to say." This self-awareness pervades both books. Alice even holds conversations with herself:

> "Come, there's no use in crying like that!" said Alice to herself, rather sharply . . . , for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people.

She shares with many of her nineteenth-century fictional contemporaries the kind of dual personality which is characteristic of a Dostoyevsky or a Baudelaire. The emblem of a person who lives a life without fixity or conclusion, she has lost her connection with the sources of life and has become a "forlorn demon," a child's version of the "underground man." Tate's Alice is in her "last days," but she has not matured. Like the Alice who shrinks or expands in size by eating various pieces of cake, modern man has become a rarified form who expands without really growing in spirit. He is in his "lost and twilight age," the same age, perhaps, which is described in Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlands.* This "sunset" or "twilight" age is part of Spengler's last cyclical stage, autumn, and both philosopher and poet use the same language in refer-

ring to the declining modern world. It is a time which, according to Spengler, is characterized by the loosening of social cohesion, the growth of rationalism and individualism, and the preponderance of mathematics. Likewise, the light in Tate's poem is a kind of autumn-light; all activity seems to be reduced to the drowsiness of impending sleep, like the "cubes of human dust" at which Alice stares with her "bored eyesight." (Plato describes the cube as the abstract geometrical form of the fourth element, earth.) Her world is like the conclusion of Pope's *Dunciad*, where all mystery flies to mathematics.

Carroll's interest in mathematics is pervasive, and his treatment of the absurd in quasi-mathematical terms is doubtless the inspiration for such phrases in Tate's poem as "theorem of desire," "turned absentminded by infinity," "a mathematical shroud," or "function depth and mass/ without figure." Much of the confusion in Alice's mind comes as a result of her entrance into Carroll's surrealistic world of nearly total abstraction; in her attempts to adjust she takes on a new personality. She has the pert curiosity and cockiness of modern man, no longer awed by the mysteries of the universe in which he dwells, but merely intrigued and bothered by them. Tate found in her a rich example of post-Cartesian man, who demands that the universe obey his mental logic. Alice is turned absentminded by infinity because she is always in a world of the abstractly possible. She discovers that speculation, carried to extremes, can be a demonic sanctuary from life, and that the nothingness which accompanies it is her ultimate escape from reality.

The mirror is the most important image in the poem, but it is not simply a symbol of abstraction. Tate uses it as an important model for the use of analogy as a way of knowledge, and in his essay "The Symbolic Imagination," he shows that the analogical mirror is a necessary part of knowing. It makes possible the distancing which is important if we are to see a certain class of objects, ordinarily invisible to the unaided eye. As Tate says of *The Divine Comedy*, "the poem is a vast paradigm of the possibility of the Beatific Vision." (Likewise, we may say that Tate's "Alice" is a paradigm of the Demonic or Vampiric Vision —a Divine Comedy in reverse.) Reading Dante, we may discover that "the number of persons, objects, and places in *The Divine Comedy* that

are reflections, replicas, or manifestations of things more remote is beyond calculation. The entire natural world is a replica *in reverse* of the supernatural world." The world, as Tate explains, exists for Dante as a kind of mirror, and all material objects are a reflection of something beyond them. Self-knowledge can only be had through the understanding of the analogical image. In a detailed examination of Canto XXVIII in the *Paradiso*, Tate shows how the act of knowing proceeds from the mirror image, through "an Aristotelian Recognition and Reversal," when we turn aside from the mirror, to a view of the one light which has cast the image. Opposed to this analogical means of knowing the ultimate or the infinite is what Tate calls "The Angelic Imagination," or the attempt to know pure essences without intermediaries—as Alice does when she plunges through the looking glass.

Dante's ultimate self-knowledge is reached through his love for Beatrice, but Alice has only

> Love for herself, who, as an earthly twain,
> Pouted to join her two in a sweet one;
> No more the second lips to kiss in vain
> The first she broke, plunged through the glass alone . . . .

What Alice does is to take the mathematical analogy of the universe, supplied by modern science, as a real picture of it. She sees the image in the mirror, but she does not turn around to view the real thing. She decides that the mirror image of herself has a validity equal to or even greater than herself and longs to join it. She is her own Beatrice, and she ends by replacing the world with herself. This "All-Alice" is the perfect example of that solipsism which Tate discusses in "Narcissus as Narcissus," a unity gained through exclusion rather than inclusion. To join her two selves "in a sweet one" is to destroy all sense of analogy; she annihilates her first lips—the physical ones—by plunging into the glass alone. "Alone" is a key word, and it is repeated in the following line. Tate mentions it on two occasions in reference to the solipsistic dream of Poe. In "The Angelic Imagination" and in a recent introduction to Poe's poetry, he explains the problems of this attitude. When Poe says that "the poetic intellect speaks to us by analogy, in proof tones to the imagination alone," he falls into a trap. As Tate points out, "The

trap is the adverb 'alone,' which contradicts the idea of analogy. If the imagination can work alone, it does so in direct intuition, angelically."

Alice, then, is truly alone on the other side of the mirror, having lost all materiality in her plunge. All matter has become "function depth and mass/ Without figure, a mathematical shroud/ Hurled at the air." Even the merely mathematical form has no permanence; it is "Empty as the bodiless flesh of fire." Tate notes, in the same essay, that "fire [in Poe] is a double symbol; it lights and it burns. It is overtly the 'light' of reason, but as action, it becomes the consuming fire of the abstract intellect, without moral significance. . . . It is the fire that, having illuminated, next destroys." The lust for this destruction is a "lust for vacancy," and its consequences are permanent.

The last part of the poem is an allusion to Dante's circle of the lustful in Hell, where the dead are buffeted by the winds like empty shells, "a dumb shade-harried crowd." If man turns the world into an artificial paradise, a geometrically or mathematically perfect reflection of his desires, he cannot recover the natural body of the world. Even death becomes an empty shroud, since it involves no body. "Poe," Tate claims in his essays, "takes God along with him into a grave which is not smaller than the universe." By creating a totally self-centered version of the universe, modern man has eliminated the need for God, and he cannot recognize His presence without a direct supernatural intervention. Even evil is preferable to a world which is both godless and inhuman. The sinless world of mechanistic and mathematical perfection must be broken by a return to "the stony path." Man must accept either the cyclical world of nature or the supernatural, but in order to discover the supernatural, he must return back to the natural world. God's wrath, in the broadest sense, is death, and it is only through a kind of death that modern man will ever return to the other side of the mirror.

Most attempts to deal with the experience of radical spiritual change illustrate the moment of transformation which occurs after a religious crisis. But "The Cross" does not even tell us whether or not the speaker of the poem will choose faith or despair. It is about the moment of crisis which makes an ultimate choice necessary, but it does not go beyond making vivid and clear the nature of that choice. An unusual aspect of

the poem is its contrapuntal use of two themes: the idea of conversion and the relation between body and soul. The Latin meaning of conversion, "a turning around," is the key to the connection between the two. One can turn around and be converted, but he can also turn around and retreat. He can change directions in two senses, in a physical, literal manner, by altering the movement of his body, and in a spiritual sense by altering the movement of his soul. Tate uses the idea of physical movement, which exists, as it were, like a buried metaphor below the normal meaning of "conversion," and depicts the spiritual by mirroring it in the physical.

The relationship between body and soul and between physical and spiritual death is pervasive in Tate's writings. In his essay "The Man of Letters in the Modern World," published almost a quarter of a century after "The Cross," he makes clear the central problem of twentieth-century culture:

> . . . a society which has once been religious cannot, without risk of spiritual death, preceded by the usual agonies, secularize itself.

This contrast between spiritual death (which is also cultural death) and common mortality is the central dilemma of the poem. "The Cross" is about a threshold situation; since secularized man has no more to rely on than his senses, then death, "where we lose touch with the zone of the realities of the senses," as Teilhard de Chardin puts it, must be the only real terror for man without religion. Indeed, all religion centers on the crucial problem of death. As Teilhard says, "In its highest and most general sense, the doctrine of the Cross is that to which all men adhere who believe that the vast movement and agitation of human life opens on to a road which leads somewhere." Secular man, who sees the grave as a dead end, can apparently react in only one of two ways. He can turn aside from the inevitable fact of the grave and attempt to live oblivious to it, or he can embrace the grave and discover that it is really the threshold of a door that opens out onto a new vista.

Tate presents the union between head and heart—or head and body —through complex analogy. In "Sonnets at Christmas" he speaks of getting "ready from head to foot" for the nativity season. The idea of

walking, turning, moving with the feet is, in fact, the first stage in any conversion. In "The Cross" the contrast between head and foot is one between seeing and walking, and this contrast runs so evenly through the poem that I shall quote the relevant passages, indicating the contrast by italicizing key words.

> There is a *place* that some men *know*,
> I cannot *see* the *whole* of it
> Nor how I *came there*. Long ago
> *Flame* burst out of a secret *pit*
> Crushing the *world* with such a *light*
> The *day-sky* fell to moonless *black*,
> The kingly *sun* to hateful *night*
> For those, once *seeing, turning back*:
> For Love so hates mortality
> which is the providence of life
> She will not let it blesséd be
> But curses it with mortal strife,
> Until beside the blinding rood
> Within that world-destroying pit
> —Like young wolves that have tasted blood,
> Of death, men taste no more of it.
> So *blind*, in so severe a *place*,
> (All life before in the *black grave*)
> The last alternatives they *face*
> Of life, without the life to save,
> Being from all salvation weaned—
> A stag charged both at *heel* and *head*:
> Who would *come back* is *turned* a fiend
> *Instructed* by the *fiery* dead.

One of the admirable aspects of this poem is the way in which the imagery of space moves from the indefinite "place" to the more definite "pit," then to the even more specific "rood," and ends, finally, in the greatly qualified repetition of "so severe a place" and the explicit "black grave." The steps of the speaker, as he moves closer and closer toward his fateful encounter, are echoed by the increasing definition of the place toward which he moves. As in "The Last Days of Alice," space is as large as the physical universe, and time is a kind of frozen present, a cosmic expanse which is made particular by a peculiar kind of analogical landscape. In blackness and blindness, the speaker can barely make out

the vague figures which stand before him; all is blotted out by the tremendous light of the pit and the "blinding rood." There is a division of sensibility evident in this disjunction between the eyes which must and cannot see and the feet which must and cannot move. In "The New Provincialism," Tate asserts that regionalism is "limited in space but not in time. The provincial attitude is limited in time but not in space. . . . The provincial man, locked in the present, lives by chance." The speaker in "The Cross" acknowledges his "provincialism." He is in a place of which he can only see a part and which remains unfamiliar and unknown to him. He is locked in the present and only recognizes two levels of time: now and "long ago." He doesn't even know by what accident he has stumbled onto this place; he "lives by chance."

This, then, is the speaker's situation—he is a modern provincial faced with the specific place and time which are part of the human condition. Surprisingly, none of the rest of the poem is concerned with him directly. The lines shift to the third person, as though in this blinding moment of realization the speaker has suddenly acquired the objectivity which will allow him to be aware of his situation. He has reached the purgatorial threshold of insight into his plight and has, for the first time, gained the possibility of choice. If the speaker is a provincial in the first three lines of the poem, his ability to see his dilemma in terms of "those, once seeing, turning back," is an indication that he recognizes his situation for what it is.

A passage which has puzzled many critics concerns the vision which the speaker describes:

> Flame burst out of a secret pit
> Crushing the world with such a light
> The day-sky fell to moonless black,
> The kingly sun to hateful night
> For those, once seeing, turning back.

If we take the "secret pit" to be the grave (secret because it is covered but also because it is unnoticed by the speaker until the last minute), then the blinding flame which crushes the world amounts to a kind of revelation about time and death. The fact of death is itself a kind of blinding realization, and the grave blinds with an excess of light which

makes all else beside it seem dark. The historic confrontation with death is, of course, the cross of Christ. The light here is not the brilliance of the resurrection; to read the lines in that fashion (as R. K. Meiners does) is to mistake the meaning of the lines which follow. The light which flares out is, after all, fire. The lines are, it seems to me, an allusion to the moment in the crucifixion (Matthew 27: 33-37) when darkness fell over the earth. After the death of Christ the nature of the world was completely changed, so that the sun is no longer "kingly" or majestic. But the darkness has come for those people who once saw what death was and are now confused by Christ's death. That event changed the nature of death, suggested that there was something even more blindingly frightful, for with a life after death comes also the possibility of eternal damnation. But the sentence is incomplete; after "turning back" there is a colon which leads us into the most difficult lines of the poem:

> For love so hates mortality
> Which is the providence of life
> She will not let it blesséd be
> But curses it with mortal strife,
> Until beside the blinding rood
> Within that world-destroying pit
> —Like young wolves that have tasted blood,
> Of death, men taste no more of it.

Love hates mortality, which is necessary for life. The war against death is both a war against nature and a yearning for something higher than nature. There is, built into the instincts of man, a desire for survival which, although it goes against the necessities of continuity and renewal in nature, is part of his everlasting dilemma. But if men no longer believe in the possibility of going beyond the cyclical processes of nature through the resurrection of the body, how are they to react to this eventual confrontation with death? Ironically, love "curses" mortality "with mortal strife." Love will not allow mortality to be "blesséd" until she finds it fulfilled in the grave which contains the blinding cross. The sentence is complicated, however, by the use of "she" as the grammatical subject when "men" must be the real subject. Furthermore, there is an aside, a simile which introduces a slightly different element.

The wolf simile is puzzling, to say the least. It implies that the "mortal strife" with which men pursue death is like a pack of young wolves out to satisfy their desire for blood. While there is a desire to do away with death (love's hate for mortality), there is also a desire to taste of death. This paradox is announced by the apparent blindness of love, who curses mortality with the very forces of mortality—mortal strife. In another poem, "The Wolves," Tate suggests a similar situation and comparison: "man can never be alone," because the grotesque presence of death and its avenging furies are always waiting for him in the next room. Man is defined only by his courage, by his willingness to open the "white door patched with light from the hall" and confront the beast, although he knows that it will eventually do him in. But "The Cross" is more complex in its confrontation. There are two deaths in that poem, and the man is not merely looking into the eyes of the beast—he is a "stag charged both at heel and head." He is under attack in two places, the heart and the head, and we will have occasion to consider the meaning of this dual confrontation later on.

For the moment, however, it is necessary to consider the unusual paradox of the wolf simile. Is man a wolf or is the grave a wolf? Men, having tasted the desire to abolish death, think that they are the young wolves in pursuit of mortality. But their mortal strife turns out to be ironic; they emerge as stags at bay. The grave is a mightier, more patient wolf. Tate has used the same paradoxical situation in "Inside and Outside," where the people in the next room attend the lady's dying until

> . . . day, harrying the game too close,
> Quarries the perils that at midnight lie
> Waiting for those who hope to mortify
> With foolish daylight their most anxious fear.

This sentence is difficult to paraphrase, but it draws our attention once again to Tate's use of light as part of man's confrontation with fear and death. Literally, the light (which is the hunter of the perils) gets too close to the feared object and reveals it rather than chasing it away. The perils, which those in the next room thought to eliminate by letting

in the light of day, turn out to have been lying in wait for them all since midnight. Tate uses another paradoxical death pun in "mortify." Those watching, of course, will be mortified by the fears they are seeking to *mortify*—to destroy in a Latinate or medical sense. Thus, the hunter becomes the hunted; the quarry turns on its attacker. Men are like young wolves in their pursuit of death; they become more and more fervent in their attempt to destroy it, until they discover that they are the stags at bay, hopelessly cornered by the very death they had hoped to destroy.

We must, however, return to the pattern of head and heel. The meaning of the poem seems to lie in the fact of the cross and the new dilemma it poses for man. Before Christ there was only the pit, the grave, to contend with. Only man's body was at stake. He was threatened by a physical death. The pit is, then, part of the "heel" or "foot" imagery; it is the place toward which all mankind moves. But the rood is part of the "head" imagery; it is "blinding" and full of light. The pit may destroy the world, but the cross crushes it with an incomparable brilliance. The place is "severe" because it is extreme and intense, difficult and rigorous, unsparing and forbidding. Nor is the harshness of death mitigated by the cross. At one time it would have been, when men saw the cross as the threshold to a world beyond. But modern man can only see a pit which devours the body and heart and a cross which is the destruction of his intellect. The man, "charged both at heel and head," can only see that he will die a violent death, whatever choice he makes of a way to die. That is why the men, blinded by the rood and confined by the grave, where their only hope for existence lies, face the last alternatives "of life, without the life to save." These alternatives are to renounce secular and worldly values or to give up altogether. The speaker of the poem, who up to this point has been incapable of accepting the faith of the cross, faces the "usual agonies" of a culture which has tried to secularize itself. Modern man turns back in order to avoid the "world-destroying pit," the realm of the sacred—the death which gives a new life in the Christian tradition.

The last lines of the poem give a glimpse of what man becomes if he tries to escape these inevitable alternatives.

Who would come back is turned a fiend
Instructed by the fiery dead.

Once the feet have been led to the pit and the eyes have been instructed by the blinding wisdom of the cross, there is only one possible escape—and that is merely a deceptive wish for escape. To wish to escape at the point of the last alternatives is to become a fiend, is to lose one's humanity completely. In "Our Cousin, Mr. Poe," Tate talks about Poe's "leading visual symbol," his "strange fire." The fiery dead are like Poe's bodiless heroes and heroines, what Tate calls his "vampires." This vampirism is the ultimate temptation of secularized, solipsistic man; it is his only form of resurrection. But the speaker refuses this possibility. The person who sees the whole of death—and surely by the end of the poem, the speaker has seen the whole of it, or is about to—cannot turn back from its implications for human existence. If he does—like the secularized, trapped man—he can only see in life a "moonless black," a "hateful night," where he floats as a disembodied vampire, living parasitically on the undead. The vampire, who sucks blood from the living, is the final transformation of the young wolves who have tasted the blood of death.

In "The Mediterranean," Tate is especially concerned with the sense of place and continuity and the dangers of the infinite. There are cultural perils in man's attempt to do away with time and space by a plunge into a boundless realm without guidance or responsibility. Place is preeminently a sense of location—the same location in the concrete that he mentions in his essay on "The Symbolic Imagination." But more than that, the sense of place has an intellectual or spiritual meaning. It has to do with appetitive powers and is signalled in the epigraph of the poem which, translated, reads, "What limit (boundary), great King, do you give for our labors (purpose)?" Thus place can also mean "duty" or "destiny," as it is understood when we say, "It is not my place to do so," and when commitment absorbs the love of self. The wind which moves the boat is not the ravaging force of time but a more docile breeze, fierce only in its determination to drive the voyagers on to their appointed goal. The towering stone is a boundary marker; it is the "peaked margin of antiquity's delay," and that delay is part of the labor referred

to in the epigraph. It is the working out of historic destinies in which all—the breeze, the gull, the boat, and the waves—seem to participate. The land does not merely draw the boat in; the seaweed parts, as though it were welcoming, and *gives* the shore to the voyagers. The "body loved" is both the object which is drawn and which attracts; the boat attracts the land to it as much as the land attracts the boat. There is a kind of loving play between the men and their new location.

The place, however, is not new, and the single, unchanging theme which is "time's monotone" has attracted the boat back to its natural landing in the bay. The whole first section is, of course, a reference to the *Aeneid*, and it consists of specific allusions to several descriptions and events in the voyage of Aeneas. But no point on the Mediterranean is truly unknown; this is "the known sea" of the South, not the blank and frozen "Winter Sea" of the North. Moreover, we know from the *Aeneid* that Aeneas and his fellow Trojans were not setting out for a new land but were actually returning to Hesperia, the land of the West which was the place of Trojan origins. The movement of Aeneas to the West is part of a larger circular journey. The civilizations of the Mediterranean, though they may have spread further and further out, have expanded in a circle of containment and have never escaped their past or center.

Vergil and Tate both suggest that salvation lies in a return to beginnings, and Tate's interest in natural time, which participates in the cyclical return of the seasons, and linear time, which renounces all returns, finds its best expression in this poem. Opposed to the circular journey of Aeneas and the Trojan civilization is another voyage—a journey toward the infinite through a cosmos of indefinite progress, fed by an indefinite hunger.

The prophecy of eaten plates is fulfilled in Book VII of the *Aeneid*. In that work it serves as a paradoxical sign; Aeneas and his followers are told that they will be reduced to eating their plates by the time they arrive at their destination, but the prophecy refers only to their devouring some hastily improvised mats. In Tate's poem, however, the prophecy is brought to its fulfillment through an eagerness to arrive. There is a causal relationship between eating the plates and finding the new home,

and these wanderers are quite ready to devour their dishes in order to hasten their arrival, instead of delaying the predestined moment. It is, indeed, in terms of food that the wanderers rediscover this land rich in beans, corn, and grapes. More than that, they discover a place where men may partake of a kind of natural "communion." In the sixth stanza of the poem, this communion is clearly available to modern man.

> We for that time might taste the famous age
> Eternal here yet hidden from our eyes
> When lust of power undid its stuffless rage;
> They, in a wineskin, bore earth's paradise.

It was not so much the household gods, according to Tate, that marked the transition between the old and new homes of Aeneas, as the food they brought with them. It was the sacramental act of sharing a meal that brought them into Italy, and we of this century might "taste" that famous age if we were willing to accept the limitations of the human community. The purpose of eating is to satisfy an appetite and settle us down. The prophecy of eaten plates is indicative of the satisfaction of desire, and the act of eating the last supplies forces the men to cultivate a land and domesticate the wilderness. Earth's paradise, then, can be borne in a wineskin; the fair land must be conquered, but with love and responsibility.

Even as we take in the land it must "unman our conquest and locate our blood." The hunger for journey is satisfied by the food of home. This sense of a rightly destined place where human continuity may be located we may call the Aeneas paradigm. It is Tate's ideal image of a healthy culture. But that is only half of the poem. Opposed to the Aeneas paradigm is the lust of power, with "its stuffless rage," an abstract rage which is like the mathematical emptiness of the Cheshire Cat. This lust for the infinite, unbounded, limitless universe is symbolized not by Aeneas, whose wanderings are guided by a goal and limited by prophetic signs, but by Ulysses (a Roman villain, the Latin version of Odysseus, familiar to us from Vergil, Dante, and Tennyson). The height of the "peaked margin of antiquity's delay" is matched by the steepness of Atlantis, and the howl of Atlantis somehow corresponds to the "stuffless rage" of the preceding stanza.

Atlantis is referred to in Plato's *Critias* and *Timaeus* as a magnificent civilization, a rival to Athens, and a near-threat to the peace of the world. Greece was the civilization within the gates of Hercules, and Athens, established by Athena and Hephaestus (the patrons of wisdom and artistry), was its center. Atlantis was established by Poseidon, the god of the infinite waters. At first a utopia, a land where all riches and necessities grew naturally, where justice and order reigned, Atlantis was a boundless continent. The huge island fell into degeneracy and lust for power. Ninety centuries before Socrates' time, Atlantis tried to take over Europe and Africa. A great battle began between little Athens and mighty Atlantis, and the Athenians succeeded in driving their enemy invaders back from Africa and Europe. A catastrophic earthquake destroyed the island.

To explain the rest of the line in which Atlantis is mentioned, we must go on to the second part of the allusion: Canto XXVI of Dante's *Inferno*, where we may find the description of Ulysses' last voyage. After their attempt to pursue the sun, he and his men were engulfed in a whirlwind which sank them near the mountain of Purgatory. Dante's mount has the Earthly Paradise at its top, and Tate seems to be associating it in some way with the dangers of Atlantis. The dangerous lust for the infinite, which drives Ulysses on (unlike Aeneas), takes him past the "peaked margin" (the Gates of Hercules or Strait of Gibralter); we, like him, have flooded westward in search of the dangerous, unapproachable, and steep ideal represented by the island utopia. Like Alice, we have passed through the perilous gate in search of the unknown. The merchant adventurers of the Renaissance, who sailed from Europe in search of adventure, did not, nevertheless, find the infinite. They found a wild and unspoiled land in which they eventually settled and which became the land that the speaker of the poem has presumably left in order to visit the Mediterranean. The infinite domain that the adventurers exulted in turned out to be a concrete place, where men could live, till the soil, and build cities. The Ulysses who discovered America was domesticated, through his descendants and successors, into an Aeneas.

Yet the spirit of modern man, exemplified by the Renaissance ad-

venturers, still remains, and it is that of the modern Ulysses who abjures homeland to join abstract journeys to nowhere. Modern man, with his belief in infinite progress, is still affected by the Atlantean spirit, the siren call of a perilous civilization. The opposition in Tate's poem is between the restrained spirit of Athens, contained by the embracing arms of the Mediterranean, and the expansive, boundless spirit of a power-hungry Atlantis. The "breathing side of Ocean" is the Mediterranean side, not the Atlantean side of abstract howl and rage. Our heritage is not in the searchers after the infinite, but in the family of Aeneas. Atlantis perished, for all its utopian ideals, but Athens and Rome live. "Time's monotone" is the answer to our relativistic minds, which can accept only the absolutely new and untried. We must lie down once more by the Mediterranean, where we can establish our blood at the particular and living land of our heritage. Time is meaningless without reference to space. To leave the past is to leave time, and even if we do succeed in escaping the past, we will only have to find it again. The earth is round, and the natural world operates cyclically, not in an infinitely drawn linear direction. No matter what we believe or do, we must inevitably return to our beginnings, just as surely as we must return to dust.

This is the central irony of Tate's poem, and once we realize where it lies, we can take better account of the numerous parallels between the beginning and end of the poem. Just as there is a voyage at the opening, so there is one at the close.

> What country shall we conquer, what fair land
> Unman our conquest and locate our blood?
> We've cracked the hemispheres with careless hand!
> Now, from the Gates of Hercules we flood
>
> Westward, westward till the barbarous brine
> Whelms us to the tired land where tasseling corn,
> Fat beans, grapes sweeter than muscadine
> Rot on the vine: in that land were we born.

But where have we landed? It appears that we are somewhere in America, except that the land sounds strangely like the Hesperia which

Aeneas discovered again. Now having stretched out as far across the globe as he can go, where will modern man settle next? In what place will he go to renew his civilization, carry on his values? We do not know, but the fact that the speaker is back on the shores of the Mediterranean tells us something essential. Sailing westward is a familiar way of speaking of death. Nature will win out ultimately over all our efforts; we cannot destroy her—only ourselves. When we sail into the infinite we shall not go freely. The barbarous brine replaces the loving breeze at the beginning of the poem, and there is no beckoning but an overwhelming of the storm-tossed boat by its destiny. The ironic result of our having cracked the hemispheres, of having obliterated directions without thinking about the effects of living in a world without direction, is that we are still forced to fall back upon the past. The Edenic land in which the boat arrives is not simply like the land we left; it is a "tired land," which has already known all that we will know. The land in which we were born may be a place of rich harvest, repose, and seeming communion, but it is no paradise. The abundance is a rotten plenitude, unkempt and unstewarded; it contrasts, in its degeneracy, with the land which received the hungry sailors on the Mediterranean. We must "lie down once more by the breathing side/Of Ocean" and learn to take care of our own land. The Ulysses who leaves Ithaca unstewarded is doubly wicked in his designs; he pursues the infinite abroad and neglects the basic necessities of his finite existence at home.

Spengler, Maritain, Ortega y Gasset, and Romano Guardini have all argued that modern man is dominated by the abstract and theoretical. By over-humanizing nature we threaten to turn the entire world into a reflection of man. When everything becomes a part of man, the analogical mirror no longer reflects the cosmos, and we have lost forever the capacity of knowing anything, since all knowledge must come through analogies.

The way to escape the natural cycle, Tate indicates, is not by leaping into the infinite but by experiencing the finite. We cannot know the infinite, except through analogy, and Tate uses the natural rhythms of life—the most basic images of light and darkness, the seasons, the elements, and history—to mirror our human destiny. Poetry is like Dante's

mirrors: it cannot give us the infinite—only a reversed and distant understanding of it. To attain the infinite we must be willing to face the choice that is set before us in "The Cross" and go beyond it. We must accept the limiting boundaries of the grave if we are to explore the never-ending possibilities of life.

TED R. SPIVEY

Conrad Aiken: Resident Of Savannah

CONRAD AIKEN has been discovered and rediscovered by readers of America and Europe, and always there has been the question of whether his writing belongs to New England, to the South, or even to Great Britain. But there is no question that Aiken the man is closely connected with Savannah, Georgia. Although his work often seems far removed from Savannah, it well may be that tidewater Georgia is more a part of his writing than many have imagined. And though the work has been undergoing discovery and examination for more than half a century, it is the man who is now being seen by certain discriminating readers as one of the great questers in the spiritual history of America.

As a Georgian who grew up ninety miles from Aiken's birthplace of Savannah, I discovered the poet while a high school student through the poem "Tetelestai" and the short story "Silent Snow, Secret Snow." I liked what I read and looked up biographical material about the author. When I found that he had moved from Savannah around the turn of the century, I assumed that Georgia and Savannah had played little or no role in his life. More than twenty years later I would read in a newspaper that Conrad Aiken had moved back to Savannah to occupy, for part of each year, a house that had been bought by the millionaire poet

Hy Sobiloff. This unusual piece of information interested me, but having mentally associated Aiken with other parts of the world, I still could not visualize him living in Savannah, a city I knew well from many visits. It was not until I read in 1965 an article by Aiken in *Life* about his good friend T. S. Eliot, who had recently died, that I realized Savannah had within its city limits an important man of letters who had come to his original home to continue his writing and that personal quest which has been the chief subject of his work.

I had taught and studied Eliot for more than fifteen years, and so I wrote to Aiken with the idea in mind that I would ask him some questions about Eliot's relationship with Charles Williams. He wrote me a friendly note inviting me to his home one Saturday afternoon for a brief visit to discuss literary matters.

As my wife and I stood at the poet's door waiting for an answer to our knock, I studied Oglethorpe Street and Aiken's Regency house. It is one of the most elegant houses in Savannah, situated on one of the city's most interesting streets. I had seen the street many times, but I had never entered any of the houses. Aiken's wife, who is Mary Hoover, a well-known artist, met us at the door and took us up a flight of stairs to the sitting room. There we met Conrad Aiken.

My discovery of Aiken the man began almost immediately, and it included the fact that the poet is as dedicated a resident of Savannah as anybody I have ever met in the city. The manner in which he talked about Bonaventure Cemetery, the fact that he and his wife had regular picnics there, greatly interested me. And his intimate knowledge of the old Revolutionary War cemetery across the street from the house amazed me. He spoke vividly of having played there as a child. Later, on other visits, I discovered that he could talk freely about the beautiful house next door where his father had killed his mother and then committed suicide. I, of course, already knew this important biographical fact. Because of this early tragedy Aiken had had to live with his New England relatives, but Savannah, as I was to find later in his autobiography *Ushant*, was deeply engraved on his soul. In fact, I have never seen a man who could talk so freely about the pain of the past and yet who

could at the same time freely accept the good in the past, the present, and the future.

Savannah, then, was deeply related to everything Aiken said to us on that first visit as well as to other things he said on subsequent visits. I say Savannah and not Georgia because Aiken knew little or nothing about Atlanta, where I lived, nor about my old home town of Swainsboro, which like many towns had once been a satellite of Georgia's first city. (My own great-great-great grandfather had gone to Savannah early in the nineteenth century to buy supplies for his plantation on the Georgia frontier and had died on the journey back.) I saw in time that Savannah has been important to Aiken both as a symbol and as a place of ordinary life. We talked on the first visit, for instance, about his championing of one candidate over another for the presidency of Armstrong State College. We also talked about seafood in Savannah and about many other aspects of the city's life.

Aiken is not now nor has he ever been regarded by the majority of its citizens as one of the great events of Savannah. The reason is clear: Savannah like the rest of the world has in this century put many things ahead of literature and the arts. Since the nineteenth century, when what used to be called "culture" was greatly inflated, the world has allowed works of art and literature, which make up much of this "culture," to become artifacts preserved by specialists as a reminder of the past activity of man's creative spirit. Today, in our minds we inflate machinery, buildings, organizations, entertainments. Thus technicians, executives, sports heroes, and clowns become central figures in American life and not poets, artists, philosophers, and visionaries. But this one-sidedness does not seem to bother Aiken. He has not, he says, felt alienated from American life. Nor has he felt that the social climate anywhere in the America he has known has interfered with his own creative work. He told Bill Winn in an interview that appeared in the Atlanta *Journal* on January 20, 1968, that he found the American climate "conducive to art." He went on to say:

> But then, the artist takes his ambience with him anywhere he goes. I've found England, Boston, Savannah and New England pleasant places in which to write. I wrote "Thee" here in Savannah. I wrote

the limericks and "Cats and Bats and Things With Wings" here too.

Winn remembered Aiken as a pleasant and aging gentleman who was optimistic about the future. In fact, the main point of Winn's interview is Aiken's belief that America is better today than when the poet was growing up and that the life of the artist in this country can be a good one.

Yet Aiken, who is the author of some of the greatest metaphysical poetry of this century, is in important matters often paradoxical. Irony, paradox, and spiritual questioning are essential to good metaphysical poetry, but the attitude that often questions, often contradicts itself is many times distrusted. Yet distrust usually springs from the childish yearning to have the kind of simplistic answers modern propagandists are always ready to supply. Aiken's life and work give no simple answers to life's meanings. Nor is Aiken, who is both optimistic and open to the world, necessarily an easy man to approach. He often seems shy and introverted. He has been sick often during recent years, and generally he avoids the limelight whenever possible. Yet he is also extroverted, spiritually robust, and has lived near the psychic center of American literary life for almost sixty years.

The complexities of Aiken's sensibilities spring not only from his inborn nature but also from the fact that he has been open to the culture of the South as well as to that of New England, and to the culture of Spain as well as to that of Great Britain. Yet the fact remains that Aiken's personality contains many of the paradoxes that are found in the life of Savannah. The Georgia city is at once introverted and withdrawn from the modern scene that its postbellum days have always seemed to deny, yet the city is also active, robust, turned outward in acceptance of the world of industry, technology, and science. It is at once the city of literary and historical groups engaged in a devout study of the past and of the two *Savannahs*, the former the first steamship to cross the Atlantic and the latter America's first atomic-powered cargo vessel. Aiken too, like Savannah, is a careful student of the past and an accepter of the contemporary scene. In his life can be found all of the

paradoxes of one who has been deeply involved in both the past and the present.

Just as Savannah has known spiritual isolation while still accepting many of the main currents of life, so Aiken has bravely accepted long periods of literary isolation while refusing to be cast off from the world around him. His sensitivity to nature, to people, and to the artifacts of man has always been and still is excellent. His involvement with environment and his sense of place have seemingly always been a part of his makeup. They account, for instance, for the richness of the nature imagery of his poetry as well as for his ability to create pictures of the urban environment of modern man.

Even as a child the city of Savannah in all its manifestations made a deep impression on Aiken. His parents took him for yearly visits to New England and the contrast helped him to become aware of his surroundings. Of this change in environment he says in an interview in the Winter/Spring issue of the *Paris Review* for 1968:

> Of course, the Savannah *ambiente* made a profound impression on me. It was a beautiful city and so wholly different from New England that going from South to North every year, as we did in the summers, provided an extraordinary counterpoint of experience, of sensuous adventure. The change was so violent, from Savannah to New Bedford or Savannah to Cambridge, that it was extraordinarily useful.

When asked about the usefulness of the change, Aiken went on to say:

> Shock treatment, I suppose: the milieu so wholly different, and the social customs, and the mere *transplantation*; as well as having to change one's accent twice a year—all this quite apart from the astonishing change of landscape. From swamps and Spanish moss to New England rocks.

Thus it was easy to see from what he has said that the Savannah environment has been important to Aiken's development both as a poet and as a man. Today that environment still speaks to him. One of the first things he said to me on my first visit was how much he liked living in the inner city of Savannah and how he had noted with approval that people in the sixties were beginning to move back into the hearts of

great cities. I have heard him speak more than once of his deep feeling for the Revolutionary War cemetery across the street from his house. Probably only a Savannahian or one very familiar with the city can understand the feeling Aiken has for Bonaventure Cemetery, which, like the Revolutionary War cemetery, is a place one visits for its beauty as well as for its monuments to both the illustrious and the nonillustrious. In this great American cemetery on the outskirts of town, with a river running past it and marshes surrounding parts of it, lie Aiken's parents. It is also the ground in which he will lie. And it is a place where he and his wife have had picnics, drinking their martinis at the grave of the poet's parents and offering libations to the deceased.

Aiken's awareness of Savannah goes beyond his relationship with its natural beauties and its stately architecture, of which his house is one of the best examples. Aiken's connections with certain Savannahians runs deep and his awareness of the human, everyday events of the city is sometimes acute. An example of the former is his close association with Dean Joseph Kalorin of Armstrong State College. An example of his interest in the daily life of Savannah can be seen in the interest he and Mrs. Aiken take not only in the affairs of Armstrong State College but also in the commercial life of the city. When Catherine Driscol and Porter Carswell III opened their popular export shop, The Shop of the Seven Seas, Mr. and Mrs. Aiken were among the first people to visit the shop and extend their congratulations to the new owners. Many other examples could also be given to show that the Aikens are still living presences in the inner city of Savannah.

Aiken's own vivid memories of living in Savannah as a child can be seen in the *Shenandoah* interview conducted by Ashley Brown and published in Autumn, 1963. This interview, which provides a brief description of the interior of Aiken's house on Oglethorpe Avenue, records the poet's description of the burning of the Catholic cathedral in Savannah in 1898, an event he watched from the balcony of the house next door. In the interview Aiken agrees with the interviewer that he does have a strong sense of region and place, which is particularly vivid in *Ushant*, the poet's autobiography. It is this sense of place, which is probably

as strong today as it was when Aiken was much younger, coupled with the poet's ability to maintain his inviolate privacy that provides one of the major paradoxes of his existence.

Aiken's creativity springs in part from his ability to live for a time cut off from the mainstream of the world as well as from his ability to return to the world even while he is cut off, to become deeply immersed in it. The explanation of this paradox lies in the meaning of the process of withdrawal and return, one which historian Arnold Toynbee says is necessary for the development of a true culture. Because he can withdraw for a time Aiken is able to seek and find spiritual riches both within himself and in poets of all ages. And because he is able to go into the world and accept it on its own terms, Aiken in his art can accurately reflect the modern environment.

Poets are traditionally seen as no more than contemplatives. Producing and consuming goods is regarded by most people in this century as the chief activity and goal of life, and therefore thinkers and artists like Aiken are often regarded as ornaments of our culture, which is now solidly based on technology and science. But Aiken has never been the enemy of either technology or science. Indeed, he sees poetry as the only speech of man that can encompass all of humanity's knowledge and vision. In the interview in the *Paris Review* he makes clear his theory of the function of poetry in any age:

> And elsewhere I have said repeatedly that as poetry is the highest speech of man, it can not only accept and contain, but in the end express best everything in the world, or in himself, that he discovers. It will absorb and transmute, as it always has done, and glorify, all that we can know. This has always been, and always will be, poetry's office.

From his grandfather, William Potter, the great Unitarian minister of New Bedford, Aiken has said that he learned "a determined acceptance of Darwin and all the rest of the scientific fireworks of the nineteenth century." His full acceptance of science meant that Aiken could celebrate the material accomplishments of our century along with the spiritual triumphs.

Aiken has always managed to be at once active and contemplative.

To be both at the same time is a rare and dying art. Literary people are losing this ability, along with everybody else, as Aiken himself has pointed out. Speaking of young writers, he says in the *Paris Review* interview:

> They—to quote Mark Twain—'swap juices' a little too much, so that they are in danger of losing their own identity, and don't give themselves time enough in which to work out what's really of importance to them—they're too busy. I think Wordsworth and Coleridge had the right idea too—they deliberately sequestered themselves.

It well may be that poets like Aiken will one day be studied as examples of people who could combine a life of both action and contemplation. Perhaps men of affairs will also return again to poetry to provide themselves with the comprehensive view of life that is lacking in our fragmented culture.

Somewhere between the life of contemplation and the life of activity lies for Aiken the life of social leisure. Perhaps it is Aiken the social drinker, sipping martinis from a silver goblet, who best epitomizes the rich sociability of the poet. To see Mr. and Mrs. Aiken driving to the Savannah River from their home with their thermos of martinis, as many have before the poet became too feeble to make these trips, provides an insight into the man and his wife, who would go past old homes and new industrial structures, accepting the coming of the new without rejecting the existence of the old. Another side of Aiken, the man of leisure and literary conversation spiced with smiles and chuckles, is provided by Dr. Robert Fusillo of Oglethorpe University. Dr. Fusillo shared an office with Aiken when he was a poet in residence at Florida Southern College. Forgetting that he was at a Methodist college which frowned on drinking of any sort, Aiken urged his students to come by and see him at the cocktail hour to talk about literature. Aiken is always at home wherever he is as long as such accoutrements of civilization as martinis and books are allowed their proper place in the scheme of things.

The paradox of Aiken the man of leisure and Aiken the man of enormous literary production is paralleled by another paradox: Aiken the man of the world and Aiken the man of a particular place. America

has always been on the move, always setting sail, and this fact has much to do with the poet's vision of the nation. For him America is not something already completed but a land that is still becoming. It is this vision of America that resolves the paradox of a writer who is at once deeply of a certain place and of everywhere. For the metaphysical poet like Aiken who believes that man is immortal because of his everlasting soul but that man is also tied to nature and therefore mortal and always dying, then paradox is inevitable. But paradox confuses those who will not dig beneath obvious contradictions. In both the *Shenandoah* and the *Paris Review* interviews Aiken insists he is not a Southern writer, and in *Shenandoah* he says: "I have never thought of myself as a *New Englander*—I think of myself as a writer." But also in *Shenandoah* he speaks of the immediate kinship he felt for Faulkner, and he says that his Southern background helped him to review *Mosquitoes* in 1927.

Aiken is not a Southerner in the way Faulkner was nor is he a New Englander like Frost, but two coastlines are the places in America that provide many of the particularities of man and nature so prominent in his work. They are the coastlines of Massachusetts and of Georgia. Of Atlanta, I have found that Aiken knows little more than that it was the home of Ralph McGill, a man he admired because, like Aiken, he was a liberal in politics. But of New England I have heard him speak only of New Bedford, of Cape Cod, of Boston and Cambridge.

Aiken's strong affinity for Edgar Allan Poe provides a clue to his attitude toward geography. He has called Poe his literary grandfather, saying that he "was the first of us to be 'international.'" Like Poe, James, and Eliot, Aiken is one of those Americans who are at once deeply embedded in their native lands and yet who find that America is also a jumping off place for spiritual voyages to other lands. Poe, James, Eliot, and Aiken seem to feel that America still has some lost relationship with the old world that must be dealt with and understood. Yet their hearts cling to the life of America. These writers have a deep appeal to people on both sides of the Atlantic. It is not that they are strangers in either America or Europe, but rather that they feel that their American life must also have an extension in Europe.

As there are two places in America that are important to Aiken's

life and work, so there are two corresponding places in Europe—Rye on the southern coast of England and Granada in Spain. It is as if the part of Aiken that belongs to the orderly landscape of coastal New England should reach out to a corresponding vista in England. But that part of Aiken that is still embedded in the Georgia coast also reaches out to the corresponding emotional and psychic complexities of the baroque life of Spain. It is as if Massachusetts and England represent to Aiken the tidiness and order of the cultivated rational mind, whereas Georgia and Spain represent the disorder and violence but also the rich beauty and deep emotional powers of the unconscious mind. Aiken's two great teachers—Santayana and Freud—also represent these two ways of the conscious and the unconscious. Santayana, part American and part Spaniard, Harvard professor and wandering philosopher, remained loyal to the rational mind; while Freud, the Jew anchored in a dying continental society, plunged deep into the unconscious on one of the greatest voyages of discovery in this or any century. With his love of contraries, Aiken has refused to sacrifice the unconscious to the conscious or the conscious to the unconscious. He has remained loyal to the deepest promptings of his soul, which tell him to accept the particularities of those landscapes that are to him symbols of the basic opposites of man's makeup.

For Aiken, Savannah is, among other things, the place of disrupting violence, where his two parents died together. The death of the parents is one of the great events of *Ushant*. In fact, the presence of Savannah haunts *Ushant*, a book in which both England and New England are balanced not only against Georgia but also against Spain and Mexico. All of these areas are deeply connected with literature and with other forms of art. Savannah, for instance, is not unlike Boston, New York, and San Francisco in having haunted the minds of certain writers, both native and non-native. Flannery O'Connor, the contemporary novelist and short story writer, lived there until she was sixteen. W. Somerset Maugham lived for a time during World War II on Daufuskie Island, a few miles from Savannah Beach, where he is said to have written *The Razor's Edge*. It is the city that haunted the imagination of Julien Green, the French novelist whose grandparents left Savannah shortly after the Civil War. Perhaps the strangest literary fact about

Savannah is that the modern French poet St.-John Perse once rented a room at the Hotel Oglethorpe and wrote there one of his greatest poems, *Pluies*. A friend of Aiken, St.-John Perse is one of the French symbolists who speaks most directly to Americans.

But probably the most important literary event of Savannah in our time is the return of Conrad Aiken to live there. Aiken's return is not one of withdrawal and retirement but is rather a continuation of his life quest to find deeper meanings and greater beauty. If this were not so, he could never have written in Savannah his book-length poem *Thee*, a work which records his Job-like wrestling with God. Wrestling with the Lord is in fact one of his allotted tasks as a follower of his grandfather Potter. In both the *Paris Review* and the *Shenandoah* interviews Aiken has said that he is Potter's follower. In fact, he carries the great preacher's sermons with him everywhere he goes.

Aiken sees himself as both teacher and preacher. "I regard myself simply as a continuance of my grandfather, and primarily, therefore, as a teacher and preacher," he tells us in the *Paris Review* interview. Teacher and preacher have seemed to most people in our time to be poles apart from artist and visionary. But the meaning of Aiken's life and work is a resolution of the paradox of the conscious mind with its teaching and preaching functions and the unconscious mind with its dreams and visions and its powerful overflow of emotions. The paradox is resolved in the quest which Aiken has taken both into his own soul and into the world. And from that quest he has gained increasing knowledge of himself and the world. Possibly more than any other work by Aiken, *Ushant* deals with this theme of the quest and the growth of the power to love and to seek truth. From his grandfather Aiken learned that it is not enough to say that one believes in some dogma or some master; one must with vision see the truth of the master's teaching. Only thus does one fulfill Aiken's often repeated echo of Socrates' injunction to know thyself. Once I asked Aiken about his own quest and he smiled deeply and pointed in the direction of the house next door where his father and mother had died. He said that it had begun there. I asked him about the pain it all had involved. The words he spoke have been

forgotten but not the smile which said that the pain had been transmuted into joy and love.

What one remembers about Aiken after talking to him is his chuckle, his smile, his laughter. One returns to visit him after a year or more and finds he has forgotten how much the poet can laugh not only at the world but at himself. His quest has had deep, beautiful moments, and Aiken is capable of the proper gravity when he talks of these moments. But there have been light moments of which his famous limericks speak. There have been both folly and wisdom. There have been the mistakes, which every quester must know, and the learning from mistakes, as when long ago he took hashish and peyote to see if they helped the artist. Years later he could report to the *Paris Review* interviewer: "This (hashish and peyote), as we find in alcohol, is an escape from awareness, a cheat, a momentary substitution and in the end a destruction of it."

Even when he speaks of a minor incident in his life, such as the experiment with drugs, he speaks with a depth of insight, with clarity—in short, with vision. He does not speak in the stereotyped tones of the moralizing preacher or the pedantic teacher, those whose words are devoid of the suffering known on the quest. Aiken's way of speaking and writing is itself an existential statement of the truth that the only effective teaching and preaching is that done by one who has taken the full risk of living. If there is only one thing we can learn from a man who has been on a spiritual quest most of his eighty years and is still on it as I write this, it is that teaching and preaching must be united with poetry and vision for there to be effective changes in the lives of people.

Since I have known Aiken only during his late seventies and early eighties I cannot speak of his earlier life, but for a man who is both old and often sick, he reveals a strong and kindly feeling for many people. One immediately observes a close relationship between Mrs. Aiken and the poet and one hears Aiken refer affectionately to his children, who sometimes visit him. One hears him speak with affection for his father and mother and with respect and admiration for professors like Santayana. But there is an especial affection, when he speaks of the past, for other poets who have also been questers and who helped and were

helped by Aiken—Fletcher, Lowry, Pound, and particularly Eliot. When I told him how much I admired what he said about Eliot in the *Life* article, he told me a dream he had the night Eliot died, a dream of a ship that had been becalmed and was again set in motion.

For Aiken dreams are visionary statements made to the quester on his journey; the basic symbol of *Ushant* as well as of poems like *Changing Mind* are based on dreams Aiken has had. In the *Shenandoah* interview he speaks of a haunting dream about Mae West and there was reported in the Winn interview an Aiken dream the night before the interview about Eliot's mermaids. In 1965, before I set out on my journey to Savannah to see Aiken, I had a series of dreams which showed that indeed he was a preacher, and was preaching at a Baptist church in Savannah. I had another dream of him digging up some valuable treasure in the sandy soil of the Georgia coast, and finally, in the most brilliant dream of all, I saw Mr. Aiken smile a wonderful and profound smile when I mentioned his great poem, "The Poet in Granada." It was in the dream as if I had spoken a word that unlocked something deep within him.

When one sets out in search of the meaning of a poet's work, he is himself on a quest. I had come to Aiken to find out about Eliot's quest and found another quester who had traveled with Eliot for a time but had also journeyed in that strange old town of Savannah and had found rare jewels of the spirit there along with early bitterness. Two years after I had met Aiken, Eliot appeared to me in a dream. I told him I had visited Aiken. He smiled and said. "You are beginning to find out about me now."

H. L. WEATHERBY

Progress and Providence

RICHARD WEAVER concludes *The Southern Tradition at Bay* by suggesting that "the South committed two great errors in its struggle against the modern world . . ."; one was "a failure to study its position until it arrived at metaphysical foundations" necessary for its proper defense, and the other was that it surrendered the philosophic and intellectual initiative to its Northern opponents. He calls the South *"the last non-materialist civilization in the Western World"*; as such it demanded a non-materialist defense. That is precisely, he says, what Southerners have failed to offer: "The South spoke well on a certain level, but it did not make the indispensable conquest of the imagination. From the Bible and Aristotle it might have produced its *Summa Theologia*, but none measured up to the task, and there is no evidence that the performance would have been rewarded."

Weaver's point is well illustrated by the numerous examples of the South's defense which his own book presents. Admiral Semmes, for instance, speaks scathingly of democracy and sees that the Southern cause is to be identified with the aristocratic principle, but he does not attempt to place his view in any kind of philosophic context or to justify the aristocratic principle as a good in itself. Likewise, when Thomas Dew dismisses Jefferson's theories as "glittering generalities" and when Chancellor Harper argues "that no man was ever born free and that no two men were ever born equal," we are again distressed by

the fact that sentiments, interesting and possibly just in themselves, are put forth in isolation, that they lack those very "metaphysical foundations" whose absence Weaver astutely perceives and rightly laments.

Perhaps the best example of this lack is one which is implicit rather than explicit in Weaver's study but which manifests itself in the whole course of postbellum history and literature. I refer to the South's failure to offer any genuine philosophical defense against modern theories of progress and of social reconstruction. The *"last non-materialist civilization in the Western World"* should have been able to repudiate such theories; for they are deeply rooted in post-Renaissance materialism, and their conquest of the Southern mind issued in the notions of a "new South," which is little more than a petty parody of the urban, industrial, and secular order of modern civilization. The notion of human progress and of the consequent necessity for periodic remodeling of the society had become current philosophical and literary coin in England before the middle of the nineteenth century. One thinks, for instance, of Arthur's valediction to Bedivere in Tennyson's "Morte d'Arthur." Tennyson is at once saddened by the collapse of the old order and heartened by the hope of progress. He knows that "the true old times are dead" and that he (as Bedivere) must now "go forth companionless" while "the days darken round me, and the years, / Among new men, strange faces, other minds." Arthur's familiar admonition from the barge offers the typically Victorian idea of society's reconstruction as a remedy for such gloom:

> "The old order changeth yielding place to new,
> And God fulfills himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

We should not allow the talk of God fulfilling Himself to obscure the essentially materialist assumptions of the theory Tennyson is voicing —assumptions which are clearly discernible when we consider the political implications of the poem. It was written in 1833, in the wake of the passage of the First Reform Bill, and it serves, among other things, to justify the jettisoning of a traditionalist and "non-materialist" order of society. Tennyson adheres to a theory of history which envisions periodic epochs of breaking and revolution in which traditional forms

are to be discarded and replaced by new and better ones. Such epochs are always terrifying and very sad, but there is a "divine" necessity in them; for if a better (for "better" we read "more advanced," "more scientific," "more democratic") order is to replace that of the Round Table, the Round Table must be broken up first. Therefore Tennyson counsels patience and hope for the future and that we reconcile ourselves to the necessary loss of "the good old times." After all, that loss will prove in the final analysis to be a kind of secular version of the *felix culpa*.

As any student of the nineteenth century knows, similar views of history are advanced by Coleridge, Macaulay, Carlyle, Ruskin, Browning, the Arnolds, George Eliot, Jowett, and many more. Carlyle's *French Revolution* is a striking instance, for there we find the terrors of the worst injustices which Europe had yet witnessed justified philosophically as a necessary stripping off of old clothes prior to the reclothing of society. The "red fool fury of the Seine" is seen as being necessary to progress, the fated and inevitable prelude to France's reshaping along "modern" materialistic lines. Carlyle would have preferred "providential" to "fated" prelude; however, in that preference he would have been confusing the issue in the same way that Tennyson does when he equates material changes with God's self-fulfillment. For it should be reasonably clear that this Victorian idea of reconstruction as the providentially ordained pattern of social progress is really an early version, still confused with Christianity, of the ideologies which have been used in this century to justify various socialist and Communist revolutions. Nor is it altogether an accident of history that when those eminent Victorians swayed the mind of England, Marx was in London writing *Das Kapital*. Indeed, Marxism is little more nor less than Tennysonianism or Carlylism taken to its logical, secular conclusion; and when we realize that fact, we begin to see how ironic it is that *"the last non-materialist civilization in the Western World"* lacked a "non-materialist" metaphysics necessary for a proper defense of its institutions against such an ideology. Moreover, it is interesting to consider that Reconstruction as a political policy, as it was perpetrated in the South, was merely an early application in practical politics of the Victorian reconstructionist theory

of history. It was a deliberate effort to shatter what remained of the Round Table when the war was over, and it was thus envisioned by the North as a period of necessary darkness before the millennium. At least that is what New Englanders were arguing, and Emerson was a disciple of Carlyle.

The doctrine of progress and the concomitant notion that revolution and reconstruction are necessary stages in the course of history are so deeply ingrained in modern thought that it is very difficult to escape their consequences. To do so a person (or a society) must take a stand, deliberately and self-consciously, against the whole current of the times, and that is no easy thing to do. As a result of this state of affairs the South remained philosophically defenseless, and it is this situation, I believe, which caused the loss of initiative which Weaver mentions. Moreover, these difficulties were aggravated by the confusion of progress and Providence which is so clearly evident in the work of Carlyle, Tennyson, and their contemporaries. The South to a far greater extent than the rest of the nation remained stubbornly Christian in its attitudes; indeed that circumstance is another proof of Weaver's central thesis. However, given the intellectual circumstances of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that religious manifestation of its "non-materialism" contributed, ironically, to the South's materialist undoing. Because Southerners were Christians, they felt constrained to listen to arguments advanced in the name of God. Thus, when the Victorians made the error of confusing a reconstructionist and revolutionist ideology with the working of divine Providence, the South's resistance to that ideology was undermined. Lacking a full philosophic understanding of their religion, Southerners found themselves accepting a set of assumptions which is little more than two hundred years old and which was then a radical departure from what had hitherto been conceived as the Christian view of society and history. The Vanderbilt Agrarians, Donald Davidson in particular, came closer than anyone else to questioning the religious and philosophical rectitude of those assumptions; but with the single exception of Tate's "Remarks on the Southern Religion," none of them addressed himself directly to making that "indispensable con-

quest of the imagination" which is finally the province of theology and metaphysics.

The time for such a conquest is now past; the Southern mind has been hopelessly reconstructed. However, in the spirit of Donne's "Anatomy of the World," it will be interesting to suggest what the nature of such a conquest might have been. The best ground for it would have been the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. Surely it is Aquinas to whom Weaver alludes when he says that "from the Bible and Aristotle [the South] might have produced its *Summa Theologia*," for the Thomist *Summa* is drawn primarily from those two sources. However, I suggest St. Thomas not simply on account of Weaver's allusion but to show that the Reconstructionist radicalism which for two centuries has passed for the Christian social ethic has no basis whatever in Christian history and cannot be reconciled philosophically with an orthodox view of the world. There is no better way to make such a demonstration than by appeal to St. Thomas, for not only is his work the best possible example of the necessary relationship between Christianity and a traditionalist theory of society, but also because his name bears such great authority. He is the Church's *Doctor Communis*, her "Common Doctor." That means, in effect, that we find in his philosophy the central ground of all Christian thought and that he sums up in his work the whole edifice of Christian civilization. Moreover, the latter is a fact of history and one which is particularly applicable to the South. St. Thomas articulated the ethos of the Christian West when, in the thirteenth century, that society stood at its philosophical and theological summit. If the South had any claim to civilization, it is that medieval civilization to which she ought to have appealed, and Aquinas, beyond all others, is its voice.

To draw out of St. Thomas' *Summa* a system of thought which would be applicable to Southern history would be the work of a book rather than an essay. However, it is possible to point to a few passages which are not only characteristic of Aquinas and which show his traditionalist, aristocratic assumptions to good advantage but which also voice familiar Southern sentiments.

He argues, for instance, that contrary to what some objectors say, men were not created equal, and that even in Paradise (here he contra-

dicts St. Augustine) there was inequality, and that inequality would have continued to be the rule of Paradise even if man had not fallen. In fact, the relationship between masters and servants is not only just and proper in itself but necessary for the health of the society. "As regards the soul, there would have been [even in Paradise] inequality as to justice and knowledge. . . . Hence some would have made a greater advance in justice and knowledge than others." It follows that some men ought, in the nature of things, to rule others and that any other arrangement of society would be unjust. Indeed, hierarchy in society is necessary, not only for the good of the society but because God Himself is glorified by that very inequality. He exalts "some above others, so that the beauty of order would the more shine forth among men," and the beauty of order manifests the beauty of God. As to the typically modern objection that "subjection is opposed to liberty," St. Thomas answers that the whole concept of liberty must be understood in reference to the end for which man lives, which is to glorify God. Men do this by fulfilling their human nature, which is to lead a "social life," and we cannot lead a social life unless we live in a society; moreover, a society demands order. Thus some who are inferior "in knowledge and justice" must be made subject for the government of their lives to other men to whom God has given superiority in these matters, not that the superior may be inflated with pride or the inferior humiliated and abased, but that the subject may be directed by his master "towards his proper welfare, or to the common good." The latter, obviously, is that social order in which man fulfills his nature, glorifies God, and thereby achieves his "liberty." The application of all these concerns to the social structure of the nineteenth-century South is too obvious to need spelling out.

So much for a "taste" of Aquinas on the Christian virtues of the aristocratic or hierarchic principle and the evil of egalitarian theories. He offers an equally sound defense of traditionalism against the ideas of reconstruction and progress. Here the foundation for his theory is the argument from natural law. Natural law is to be understood as an implanting of the eternal law (the expression of the very mind of God) in our human nature. Thus an appeal to natural law is at once an ap-

peal to our most intimate instincts of what is right and wrong, proper and improper, and at the same time an appeal to the will of God. Such an idea of an essential harmony between God and man, nature and grace, is thoroughly medieval and radically opposed to the Calvinism that infected England and America in the nineteenth century and which is partly responsible for the new notions of society which have destroyed the South. Such a harmony makes possible, as Hooker showed against the Puritans, a defense of what has been established by human effort and what has stood the test of human experience. Like the Cromwellians and the abolitionists, the modern reconstructionists conceive of an irreconcilable conflict between absolute right on one hand and human likes and judgments on the other. Hence they preach the necessity for the periodic destruction of established goods in the name of some abstract justice which the work of progress, or of Providence, will bring into being.

Aquinas' natural law theory argues to the contrary that since man can perceive God's will in his very nature, what he builds and establishes in the world, in the course of history, insofar as it is reasonable and orderly, can be depended on to be Godly, even though there may be no absolute moral injunction to which he may appeal for its justification. It follows, therefore, that tradition and custom have a holy authority implicit in them and that there are few circumstances indeed in which the violation of what is established can be justified. "It is silly and really rather uncivilized and a shame [*Ridiculum est et satis abominabile dedecus*] that we should suffer the old traditions received from our forefathers to be broken." The quotation is by Aquinas from Gratian. St. Thomas' own gloss on it is that only under the most "urgent necessity" should custom be violated, and such a necessity solely occurs when the custom itself is contrary to the natural law. In that case it is in no genuine sense a "custom."

Of course, one reconstructionist rebuttal to such an argument might be that the customs which governed nineteenth-century Southern life were precisely those which are contrary to the natural law and which should be abolished; but no one who has read St. Thomas carefully and who understands what he means by natural law could maintain that point for long. By natural law he most emphatically does not mean what

nineteenth- and twentieth-century people call the knowledge of the conscience or the heart, which is always the battle cry of those who protest against establishment. On the contrary, natural law is objective and rational—corporate rather than individual and egalitarian in its application—and order, hierarchy, and the precedence of the whole community are germane to it. In the context of the views with which we are here concerned there can be little question that Southern customs were precisely the sort which *do* reflect the natural law and which it would be "silly and really rather uncivilized and a shame" to abandon. Another typically modern argument against the applicability of natural law theory to Southern institutions might be that values change with the times so that what was right or "natural" for medieval society was manifestly wrong and unnatural for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But if we examine that familiar argument carefully it proves to be just one more version of the revolutionist-reconstructionist ideology whose philosophical grounds are in question. On the contrary, the Thomist understanding of natural law assumes at the outset that the value of customs is to be measured by absolute rather than by historical standards: that no institution can be justified or condemned merely on the basis of its place in history; and that the only grounds for such justification or condemnation is the truth or goodness of the institution in itself. If Southern civilization was built upon the natural law, if it corresponded to the nature of man and of the universe as God made them, then there can be little or no historical justification for its reconstruction.

A respect for "the truth or goodness of the institution in itself" suggests another aspect of Thomist thought which might have been applicable to the construction of a Southern *Summa*—namely, St. Thomas' "realism." By that term I mean his rejection of any theory of cognition which is not grounded in sense images. Aquinas asks "whether the intellect, using only innate ideas and without turning to sense images, can actually understand?" The Platonists, the idealists, say "yes!" They maintain that our knowledge is given directly to the mind by God, in certain innate or, possibly, infused ideas, and that we are under no obligation to our senses, at least not for the knowledge of God and of divine realities. Aquinas' answer is that "it is impossible for our in-

tellect, in its present state of being joined to a body capable of receiving impressions, actually to understand anything without turning to sense images." Consequently, "the intellect . . . rises to the limited knowledge it has of invisible things by the way of the nature of visible things." Immediately we see how important for St. Thomas the real world is; even man's knowledge of God, his salvation, depends on what the senses teach him. It follows, also, that place is important, and with place all the particular things which constitute locality: the smells, the vegetation, the weather; the people, their racial stock, their habits, and their past. To ignore those physical facts is to ignore the very ground of knowledge, those sense images on which even the knowledge of God is ultimately based.

Moreover, it is this respect for the physical reality, for people and places, which, if taken seriously, makes a reconstructionist theory of history impossible. In Stark Young's *So Red the Rose*, Hugh McGehee says to Duncan Bedford, "But I've noticed that our people here'n this country—by way of defending themselves, I reckon—have already begun boasting of what they had, their former splendor, and so on. But what they would do better to speak of would be not what they have *but what they have loved*" [italics mine]. We love individual people, things, places, houses, and customs. There is no such thing as loving history, progress, or "the times." Moreover, the only basis for love is some measure of goodness in the thing loved. If a particular custom, place, or civilization is good, man is bound by his very nature to love it; and it is in that love that the natural-law theologian's respect for established order and the realist philosopher's respect for the individual person or place bear their mutual fruit.

That fruit, if Southerners had been able to pluck it a century or more ago, might have provided a saving nourishment for their civilization. Even fifty years ago it might have enriched still further the richest literature of the century. Southern poetry and fiction have reflected the sense of hierarchy and the belief in a traditionalist society which have informed Southern civilization as a whole, and like that civilization the literature which it produced could probably have been strengthened by a Thomist "conquest of the imagination." It is manifest that the Vic-

torian and New England myth of social reconstruction, which provided the central literary metaphor for nineteenth-century poetry, was not at all appealing to writers of the Southern Renaissance who, like Aquinas, were persistently anti-Platonic in their epistemology. In fact, the dominant motif in almost all Southern writing is the love of land and place and of the traditional customs which belong to land and place; and again and again the major Southern poets and novelists repudiate the modern view of the mind as its own place, which can make a hell of heaven or a heaven of hell. Moreover, with that view, these writers with equal persistency also rejected the theories of progress which go hand in hand with idealism. History, as Southern literature conceives it, is not the development or working out in time of some idea which dwells only in the mind and which in its supreme abstraction from flesh and blood and land and customs rides roughshod over the dear, tender, particular things which human beings love and by which they live. On the contrary, Southern literature has viewed history as the accretion of those concrete institutions, embodied in story, by which a society gains its right to exist in time and place.

However, it is at that very point—in that reference to time and place—that we see how Thomist thought might have nourished Southern literature. For in St. Thomas' philosophy, as we have seen, the ordering of individual, historical realities can be understood in light of the ultimate order and end of the entire universe. Thus a Thomist poet like Dante is able to show us the relationship between the concrete, particular realities of thirteenth-century Florence and the divine order of the cosmos; and it is just such a synthetic vision of the world which Southern literature needed for its wholeness. Even at its best Southern literature falls short of full metaphysical clarity; the world's greatest literature has always achieved that clarity. The South produced nothing comparable to the "Paridiso," *The Tempest*, or the "Mutability Cantos" for the same reason that it never produced an adequate philosophical justification for its social system. Both its political and literary instincts were sound, but it never brought them to full, conscious maturity. Faulkner knew better than to impose a pattern of revolution and reconstruction on the traditional society of Jefferson; however, he did not know enough

to understand and to portray the metaphysical significance of that society. Had he been able to show us the ultimate theological consequences of human action and the good of divine order reflected in the concrete details of the Mississippi world, the Yoknapatawpha novels would have been even richer than they are.

Such an "indispensable conquest of the imagination" was, at least in this century, a unique possibility for Southerners, simply because theirs was "*the last non-materialist civilization in the Western World.*" Therefore, it is a particularly bitter disappointment that from the Bible and Aristotle the South produced no *Summa* and, for that matter, remained largely ignorant of the one Aquinas had already produced; that Jefferson, as splendid as it is, is never understood in terms larger than the mundane ones which have circumscribed most of our literature for the last two centuries; and that Southern poets and novelists, like Southern social theorists, have only managed to speak well—though very well —"on a certain level."

ANDREW LYTLE

The Old Neighborhood

An excerpt from A WAKE FOR THE LIVING

In 1868 Ephraim Foster Lytle died. He got up to make the fire, as was his habit. Crawling back to his side of the bed, as the cedar kindling crackled and spat, he said, "Great God, Judy, you are as big as a mountain," and fell dead across her.

Julia put on the widow's cap and with it assumed control of their affairs.* She found the estate confronting a debt of $19,000. Most of this was incurred by a common habit of the times, going friends' notes. This was a tremendous sum of money to owe in a desperate day, when taxes alone were hard to pay. There seemed little hope that she could save the place. The men in the family advised her to sell and salvage whatever she could. Squire Fletcher, her lifelong neighbor, proved the good friend in adversity. He admired, respected, and loved her. He had seen how well she managed during the Civil War: he went her note. Being a Union man, the Squire had been able to make a good deal of cash money by buying cotton and running it through the lines. She did not disappoint him. She kept her counsel and receipts and with Uncle Ike as overseer made the place pay. The remarkable part was how she did it. There was no waste but no stinting. She served a bountiful table when company was present and aplenty other times. Otho Singleton

* *Ephraim Foster Lytle and Julia were my father's grandparents. Julia is "Grandma" in this narrative. Her daughter, "Mammy," is my grandmother on the distaff side. She married her great-uncle W. F. Lytle's son, Robert.*

was a cousin and congressman from Mississippi. He always stopped over going to and from home, and at that time she would open a pile of sweet potatoes. Potatoes were covered with dirt against severe weather. You must cook these at a reasonable time after they are disturbed. Once put down the sugar goes to the bottom. If you turn them over and the bottom ends up on top, the sugar will still seek bottom. This time, going down, it will ruin the potato.

Grandma's widowhood began during the closing days of Reconstruction in Tennessee. Reconstruction is an abuse of language. It was the final stroke of destruction upon a certain kind of society, not altogether agrarian but predominantly so. Certainly it was a society of families. The physical exhaustion of land and its improvements was completed by the spiritual apathy of the young war veterans. Those who had families made an effort to feed them; yet many idled and drank their lives away. There was no money. The South, united by defeat, became an economic province of the East and Threadneedle Street in London. Interest on loans was frequently twenty per cent. But whiskey was only fifty and seventy-five cents a gallon and made for an easy escape. Barring some men with the kind of heroism which demands poking in ashes and rebuilding out of shards, with the tedium this requires, the maintenance of life depended upon the women, largely the grandmothers. It was the moral certitude, the strength of the best of these women which, without calling it by name, made for the matriarchy. It could not resurrect; it did hold the wake, the illusory sense of life prevailing in the presence of death. It was no accident that the jug, actually or metaphorically, sat upon the coffin lid.

Grandma exhibited the wisdom and sound management of this rule. She bought two barrels of sugar to run her for a year, one brown, one white. If my father wanted a sugar lump, he had to pick a quart of whatever fruit was in season, or go out when the passenger pigeons blackened the sky in their flight south and find their roost. This bird broke tree limbs in settling for the night, and so senseless was it it allowed people to pick sackfuls with no protest. But Grandma would not eat doves. A dove brought the message to the ark.

She never gossiped, lest she be made to "swallow her words," but

when the occasion was a serious matter, she did not hesitate to remind others of their place and duties, because she knew her own. Late in life Squire Fletcher and his wife, who had been tippling, quarreled and were set on getting a divorce. She had her buggy hitched up—no woman walked even across the road in those days—and drove over to her neighbors'. She told them it wouldn't do; and they, no doubt waiting for such advice, made it up.

She was very strict about manners. Once an old kinswoman was visiting, and my father asked the guest how long she was going to stay. The old woman smoked a pipe, and the longer she stayed, the more tobacco sacks he got for his marbles. Grandma took him aside and told him what bad manners it was to ask such a question; then, lowering her voice, she said, "How long did she say she was going to stay?" With what glee he told this to Polly and me.

In these declining years Grandma seemed to maintain Rose Hill in its old way, almost even in its old style. The pile of sweet potatoes was still kept until Cousin Otho Singleton passed through on his way from Washington to Mississippi, but there were ominous signs. The little boy, William Searcy, had died before his twelfth year, and during her time of stress she must have worked the other boys pretty hard. As soon as she got on her feet, with debts paid, they began to go away. Uncle Tom, her youngest, not much older than my father, his nephew, she sent off to law school. Maybe he wanted to go; maybe she thought it would be some protection to him, for he had been a bad boy. She took him to the penitentiary to show him where bad boys went. There were some big wheels he was playing with. He had a fine time and didn't want to leave. How much work she got out of Uncle Jack is dubious. Uncle Eph seemed to be her mainstay, but he finally got enough of the country. All by himself he fenced a large field. After that he came to town, married Miss Susie Weakley, and went into the clothing business with Mr. Partee. By this time she had divided the land among them. Uncle Jack's share joined the homeplace and his house was, as I remember it, within sight of her own. It is questionable

how much comfort he was to her. He was by then a dedicated but disappointed courtier of ideal love.

It was her habit to drive to town once a year and buy supplies and relocate in her mind all her blood. She knew in what veins and in what quantities it flowed and even the connections it was compromised by. There would be farming gear to replenish and seed for early sowing. She spent the day or night at Mr. Weakley's store, where Aunt Susie and Uncle Eph kept house. On one of these trips she sent word to Uncle Jack, as she was ready to go back to the country, that he might drive her home, if he was sober. He was easily discovered at Guggenheim's saloon on the southwest corner of the square. "You tell Ma," he said, "her message came too late."

The preachers always accepted her invitations to Sunday dinner, much to the chagrin of the neighbors, for her table was abundant. Kin and connection frequently drove up to spend the day or make a longer visit. One of these who was always welcome was Cousin Ada Colville, her husband's niece. She would come down from McMinnville to see her family on the Franklin dirt road and stop over on her way home. McMinnville was then as now sound as a nugget of gold. During the bank holiday it had the only bank in the United States that didn't close its doors. Among other things its citizens cut crossties and bought ginsang—"Sang" it is called, a rare mandrake-looking herb worth its weight in gold, for the heathen Chinee think it restores potency. A man from the hills would come in with a little sack of it and drive home a two-horse wagon loaded with supplies.

Cousin Ada was a round jolly little matron and gave much pleasure to those about her. On this particular day Grandma had several other guests. She had put herself out, and the table groaned, as they used to say. For meat there would have been fried chicken aplenty or young broilers, if they sat down in May instead of June, or perhaps spring lamb, or if in early fall mutton, for nothing went to waste on her place. When the time came for the old ewe to do her part, she was called on. Beef would have been unlikely, for it was a rarity. Without ice it was hard to keep. Few country houses had ice houses. If the winter was mild, the ponds would not freeze over and the ice, what there was of it,

didn't last. People formed beef clubs, and a young heir could not inherit a more valuable gift than his father's membership. The club was composed of twelve men, each of whom, when his turn came, furnished an animal for slaughter. The meat was divided twelve ways each month, so that each member in a year's time ate a whole cow, unless he wanted to trade his share off. The butcher got the hide and a dollar.

As constant fare there would be corn pones or sticks, and salt-rising bread, which was prized in Mammy's, her daughter's, house. I never liked it. It was heavy and crumbly and had a strange taste to me as a child. Aunt Lady used to have hot beaten biscuit on Sunday night. If she learned this in her Grandmother's house, there would have been these biscuits that day for the two-year-old ham which sat on the sideboard. Ham was never anything but a side dish in Grandma's house. Of course the usual jellies and jams and pickles and citron made of watermelon rinds, to me rare and strange. These condiments were delicacies, for there were no artificial aids then. Strawberries can stand very little heat, or they lose the fragrancy of their taste. Grandma put the berries and sugar in a pan on the roof and let the sun cook them. Such thought and skills showed there that day at that board. Ice cream made of custard and cakes with icings so thick it was like soft candy with a crust. The dessert, however, was plum pudding; so maybe the weather was frosty and drawing toward Christmas. If so, the meat would have been turkey. She had a plain man for guest. When the pudding came in blazing, and the blue flames licked the air, he called out, "Look thar, Miss Jule, your bread's a-fare."

They ate long and hearty and washed the food down with milk or buttermilk or just plain water. It had been noticed that toward the end Cousin Ada had been a little restless in her chair, and so Grandma did not linger at table but rose so that all could withdraw into the family room. However, Cousin Ada excused herself for a moment and went into the parlor. Parlors were not used except on occasions such as death, weddings, or courtships reaching serious considerations. Then a fire would be made to blaze and cheer the young couple in their anticipation. It so happened that Uncle Jack had not joined his mother's guests that day. He had withdrawn into the parlor to lie down upon the sofa.

Cousin Ada's entrance aroused him somewhat. In her haste she did not see him. The flea which was hopping beneath her underskirts also bit here and there. She hunted in earnest, bent way over and lifting this skirt and that. It was no easy matter, for dresses reached to the floor and even at times dragged behind. During this hunt, the blazing plum pudding betrayed her. Uncle Jack leaned up from his couch. "That's right, Ada," he said. "You can't ketch him, shoot him."

The occasions became rarer for such a board, particularly after Mammy moved away. At the fair, as she was climbing over the seats for a good perch, she tripped and fell back into the arms of Mr. Alexander. She was light of foot, so there was much wondering how it could be that she showed herself to be so clumsy. The wonderment ceased when not too long afterwards she married him and moved with her family from the Shelbyville pike to the Hall's Hill pike. Grandma took some comfort in this, as Mr. Alexander was a man of substance. He had farmlands, a turnpike, notes at hand, all those possessions which prudence and luck awarded. Mr. Alexander's first wife had been a friend of Sara Childress, wife of President Polk. She also dabbled in astronomy and had a magnificent library which Mammy burned. With great energy Mammy set about effacing on the farm and in the neighborhood the memory of the first woman. She did not hesitate to use bribery and gifts. One old man held out, until she gave him an ancient silver drinking mug. The east fork of the Stones River ran through the farm. Mr. Alexander owned a mill and had a Scotsman for miller. Farmers appreciated the good land and what it made, for there was rough land also and knobs of little worth. During the time of Haley's Comet, thinking the world was coming to an end, an irate farmer cut the middles out of his best hams and ate them.

But there is no perfect situation. Mr. Alexander was almost seventy and Mammy forty. Grandma was nevertheless grateful. No one knew better than she the value of sound properties. What she had had to do to keep her own. There are tares and bitterweed in the fairest pasture. And reckless blood in solid families. She had learned this as a girl, at home, before her father's grief and worry. Her own children took after her side of the house, particularly the boys. They had her round face

and were big-boned and heavy. Jack drank and Tom gambled, but so far there had been no shooting scrapes. Eph was married and in business and showed his good sense, but Tom expected the world to wait on his pleasure. Jack still had hopes some Turkle Dove might light on his roof tree.

Tom set himself up as a lawyer. This meant dealing in politics and its trades carried out over tobacco smoke and barley corn, as the spittoons were stained in brown squirts of liquid, in out-of-the-way boarding houses and small inns which still used back houses, with a box of fresh corncobs inside and the lime bucket in the corner. This man's world he enjoyed or seemed to enjoy. It was a world apart from the domestic world of the family and community. Perhaps he had lived too long in that world, and one finally could wonder at his loyalties. Miss Lizzie Robinson never loved another so well as him, but he was slow to come to the point. He would forget to take her to dances—perhaps the cards were running too well or too poorly—and my father would step forward and take his place. Aunt Lizzie finally got tired of this and married a Mr. Fox. Good man that he was, he loved and tried to please his wife and showed this supremely in his death. He left her a small estate. Not too long afterwards she and Uncle Tom were married. And not too long after the hymeneal celebration she wrote a small check and it bounced. She knew she had ten thousand dollars in the bank and was puzzled. Uncle Tom had gambled her bank account all away. She appealed to his brother Eph in tears. He promised to discipline his younger brother. As she walked away, she turned around and said, "Eph, don't be too hard on him." Uncle Tom thought it the greatest of jests. He asked, "Lizzie, who do you love best, the quick or the dead?"

This banter of his seemed to me, a child, to have no meaning beyond the moment. To him there was no game worth anything beyond the playing; and yet the Lytles were all good card players and loved to win. At one time he was to run for Governor, but this went by the way and Uncle Eph had five thousand dollars worth of campaign pictures in the top of his storehouse. That's a lot of looking at a brother and a good price to pay when all you have to do is step out the door and see him in the flesh. And there was a lot of it. He was a big man

and persuasive before a judge and jury. In Grundy County once he was trying a case and after five minutes had it thrown out of court on a point of law. Breeches' pockets all had pistols, but this made him no mind. A mountain man told me this years later with great admiration. The only thing of equal moment was Bill Elliott taking a pistol out of the sheriff's hand. This was at Monteagle, where several mountain counties come together. Violence was known to occur hereabouts. Some of it was from the feuds starting in the Civil War days. They were not too honorable as feuds. The Union side and the Confederate both raided families and bushwhacked while the men were away fighting. Before this, feuds, that is shooting feuds, were rare things. Men fought generally with their fists. Sometimes with knives, but it was usually the question, "Fist and skull or stomp and gouge?" The railroad going through Monteagle separates Marion and Grundy counties. In my time a man, I've forgotten his name, was stabbed on the track. The doctor was slow to arrive—the roads were none too good, sandy and twisting, and made for horse and buggy or just a saddle horse. The wounded man thought he was about to approach his maker. The church members gathered and prayed and sang, particularly that good old hymn, "Shall We Gather at the River." He forgave his enemy and as soon as he could he would tell him so. He did not promise the kiss of peace. The doctor looked at the wound, took a wash cloth and cleaned it out. "It's just a flesh wound," he said. "You'll be up and about in a few days." "Give me my breeches," he said, sitting on the side of the bed. "I'll kill the son of a bitch."

Uncle Tom's in-laws were painfully shy and the women all had flashing eyes. Once Uncle Tom brought Jack to their house for dinner, thinking no doubt that the food would do him good. As he sat before the fireplace, old Mrs. Robinson addressed herself to him. "Mr. Lytle, do you think my chimney will draw?" It had just been mended. "Draw," he replied. "It will draw your coattails over your head."

Coattails and woman's garments were much in his mind, for his quest was love. In the beginning as a young man it was ideal love, but there was nothing Manichean about it. He never saw the flesh and spirit apart. Sadly enough, the Muse who roosts so near the beloved likes best

soft, dulcet tones. And this requires a mellow palate, not a cleft one. No matter how seductive the words, it is hard to raise a mush-mouthed drone to lyrical heights. But Uncle Jack tried. Somehow the cleft compounded the ill luck of his pursuit. One night he was courting in a neighbor's house. The weather turned bad and he found himself benighted. Time came to go up into the boys' room and he remembered that he had forgotten to put on any socks. He could hear what unkind people people might say about the old sock, or sockless but not bootless. He pulled away in the corner and when the boot yielded said to his room mates, "Off come boot sock and all."

Luckless as he continued in these affairs, he had visions of maenads and nymphs with gently stroking hands, brought at last to earth in a foot-washing Baptist church house at Christiana. It was rumored that the young ladies would minister to the foot-weary and to the sinners. Jack could hardly wait, thinking of those sweet-smelling fingers and the tickling water submerging the foot, the lifting out, the rough caress as the flesh was dried. He was careful this time to wash a foot and put on a fresh sock. Alas, before he could protest, a buxom country girl jerked off the wrong boot. With averted nose and a scowl she passed him by. When the collection pan was passed and the last hymn sung, he went outside, untied the halter, and took a drink.

One wonders whether he knew he had become a comic figure. Sober, he was painfully shy and did not go about much among people, not even to my father's wedding, although members of families always foregather for such occasions. In his young manhood he kept the company of the Butler boys. They hunted and fished the streams, and then they would play cards and drink, or even shoot marbles, the masculine country sports of boys and young men. One morning Mrs. Butler called up the stairwell. "Boys," she said. "This is Monday. Let's turn over a new leaf." Uncle Jack leaned up from the feather pillow. "All right," he said, "turn her over," and his companions spooned back into sleep.

His mother, like all hard-pressed parents, thought a change of scene might mend him. At least it would remove him from the companions who were leading him astray. The son is always led astray. He never leads. She sent him off to school. He wrote home, "Dear Ma,

I thought you were going to send me somewhere. I'd no more than got on the train before they said, 'All off for Sweetwater!' Quit sending so much advice and a little more money. You send barely enough to keep me from stealing."

It was a very strict school. The boys had to bury their liquor in the ground and suck it up through wheat straws.

There is no record of his stay at Sweetwater; but when he was back home, his pursuit of love became constant. The sorrows of love, no matter whose, will always entice and divert us from business and the carnal tedium which afflicts even the saints at times. A cleft palate is so obvious a defect. A cleft foot is harder to take note of; so it was to be expected that his lovelorn plight and equally bad luck got about. People began to tease him, and since he was forever hopeful and took the risk of love, this was easy sport. In those days for entertainment there were play-party games. They were very much like children's games: Fox in the Wonder, Goose and the Gander, Musical Chairs, and especially charades. At a particular country house, a young woman came up to Uncle Jack and said, "Mr. Lytle, if you will hide in the chest, I'll find you." In this game the lights were put out and everybody hunted for *It*. In the dark you could kiss. Her eyes were mischievous and alluring. "I'll shore do it," he said.

He slipped into the chest; she lowered the lid, and then he heard the key turn. This was disconcerting; perhaps she was being extra careful. The players wandered about, calling and jesting and supposedly looking, when somebody yelled, "Fire." This is a most frightening word in a country house. There was scurrying about and the moving of furniture. Uncle Jack suspected a trick, but when the old grandmother raised her quavering voice, "Be sure and save my sewing machine," a new instrument then and valuable, his muffled shout could be heard, "Let the sewing machine rest. Take the chest. Take it and set it way out in the yard."

This was coarse humor, but it is a humor common to farming society and to our inheritance from the old country. Malvolio suffered it. It had a quality which the traveling salesman's joke and the general obscenity of so-called humor lacks. The jester in receiving his public

embarrassment received it through laughter, kind as well as humiliating. All it hurt was vanity, unless wit was lacking. Such chastisement allows the community to purge itself, to remind itself of our common plight.

At last fortune perched upon his roof tree. A school teacher from Mississippi agreed to marry him. But he must promise to give up drinking. He made the heroic decision, but who can tell what lies in wait to undo us. He had a friend whose wife was ambitious to take all the prizes at the County Fair. She had sewed and baked and jellied and jammed and even tried her hand at making beaten biscuit, when everybody knew that Aunt Susie's Car-line got the prize one year and Wright Ross's aunt's cook from McMinnville got it the next. Nevertheless she took the challenge. It was a bold one, and there is little doubt but what the domestic routine of her household suffered an unusual strain. She didn't get a ribbon; one, I think, a red one, for her husband's sorghum molasses. The only other molasses better than Warren County's used to be, before the government interfered, was Sand Mountain's above Guntersville.

Uncle Jack helped tote the defeated objects and artifacts down to the spring wagon. The steps were very steep in the Women's pavilion. The lady's ire blinded her vision. She stumbled over a dragging quilt and fell head over heels to the bottom of the stairs and lay there. Her husband didn't offer to pick her up. He did say, "Well now, showed everything you've got and ain't taken a prize yet."

Uncle Jack had no notion of this aspect to marriage. The skies darkened with rain clouds and a chill came into the air. Downcast in mind by it all, he found he had taken a drink. No man can stand long on one leg; so he took another. Before the day was out, his girl smelled his breath and gave his ring back. Each time he thought of woman, her unreasonableness and, he was compelled to acknowledge, her greed, he took another drink. He decided to go and get his presents back. He hitched up his wagon—he had only to drive into Bedford County—but he was late coming home. The family came out to greet him, hoping the lovers had made it up. He was muddy. It could be seen that the wagon had turned over several times. In the back there rode one present, a parrot with ruffled feathers and a muddy cage. Uncle Jack turned

his head. "I offered Poll a drink, but she declined. One of us better stay sober, she said."

After this there were for him only the mourning doves, which he shot occasionally for the table. He took a housekeeper. There is not much to go on as to how well she cooked or how tender was her care. She must have been a stout girl, for one night in her presence he took his pistol and shot at a clock Mammy had given him. Apparently it didn't impress her. She remarked that she was a good pistol shot herself, which he seems not to have been, as the clock was still running the next morning. He picked up the pieces and brought them to his sister. "Here, Sis Kate," he said, "are thirteen superfluous works out of that clock you gave me."

His plight found at times the shocking reprieve of delirium tremens. Even this failed to arouse sympathy. One Christmas my father, a growing boy, and he were together in the family room. Two candles burned on the mantel. Uncle Jack looked at them unsteadily and turned to his nephew. "How many candles are burning there?" "One," his nephew said.

There is only one sensible contemplation for the lover perpetually denied; those spirits which give the desire but taketh away the execution. When these fail, the lover wanders out the night: and in a country neighborhood, out of loneliness, calls where his horse takes him. Sometimes a young Fletcher would find him as bedfellow, or he might drop by Squire Fletcher's, the childless brother to Mr. Fletcher, and engage a serving man of his in conversation. And perhaps in drink. This man was a Yankee who had stopped by on his way home after the War, to remain in the Squire's service. Jack sat up with him in his last illness. He was there when the Squire measured him for his coffin. Since the man was still alive, Jack thought this premature. "Don't do the work of the worms, Squire. They'll measure us all without pay." The Squire was not deterred. From head to foot he measured, allowing a little for miscalculation. He licked his pencil and wrote down a figure. "I've got a wagon going to town tomorrow. It will save a trip."

Between Christmas and New Year's there is a surfeit which dulls the palate and cloys appetite. Jack must have tried hard to drink this

away. Certainly charity had run out on him and tale-bearing in. His decline must have seemed obvious to many; I found copies of these two notes, both in a very fine hand.

Mr. R.L. Jamison

Having reliable information that you have charged me with appropriating funds from your cash drawer, I demand that you give over your signature a denial in toto, that the charge may be proven a base fabrication without the least grounds for suspicion.

(Signed) John Lytle, Christmas Dec. 29, 1876.

Mr. John Lytle

Dear Sir

Yours of this date to hand, in reply would say that if you have given the least credence to the report from any circulation that I may have given it, I assure you that I heartily retract all that I may have said and farther state, I believe you have been maliciously misrepresented. Hoping the above may be satisfactory

I am yours as ever
(Signed) R.L. Jamison
Christmas, Dec. 29, 1879.

The later date must be the right one, or had Uncle Jack along with the clock shot time away?

He was not, in spite of his sorrows, without friends. I knew one of them, Captain Weaver, conductor on the boat train coming upriver from Hobbs Island, Huntsville's river port. It stopped at Gunter's landing, untrained freight cars and passengers; then waited to reload its downriver traffic. The boat train ran from Guntersville, over Sand Mountain, to Gadsden, where it turned around to make the return trip. The Captain was a little man. One leg was shorter than the other, but he had the merriest eyes and a quick temper. I saw him always with a corncob pipe in his mouth. I wondered if their disabilities did not increase their common sympathies, but then nobody has defined the essential attractions between friends and lovers. This friendship certainly

proved lasting. He refused to take up our tickets, my mother being connected and I blood-kin to Uncle Jack. There was no embarrassment on the Captain's part for his favoritism, even though this courtesy was beyond the call of manners. It was not his train, but he was not quite sure about this. He knew he was in charge. Once in a dry time, when the river was low and the slough almost dry, the boat had to stop too far from shore and there was delay in landing. It started to rain and, knowing we were aboard, the Captain came out in a skiff, with an umbrella which he held over my mother's head until we reached the bank and climbed aboard.

This was the way he ran things. One time the engineer was slow to respond to his signal to start. (The engineer was talking with a member of his family.) Captain Weaver jerked the cord sharply; the engine panted but did not move. In a rage he walked down the platform, onto the cinders, up to the water tank and drew a pistol. "Start this train," he commanded. The words were high; then the engineer leaned out of the cab and bared his breast. "Shoot!" he said. "Shoot."

Happily the boat train got under way, among cinders and smoke but no blood. The Captain rarely bluffed, except as a prelude for position. He was a great chicken fighter. This part of Alabama, especially Huntsville, was given to the sport. I'm told people came from as far away as Texas and that bets ran as high as fifty thousand dollars. In his eagerness the Captain had been known, no uncommon practice, to jump into the pit and suck the blood which was choking his prone rooster and the rooster would flap and fight again. My father had given him lumber to build a chicken coop and yard at the edge of the sawmill, which was right across from the depot. I don't know how much #3 or even #2 common my father left behind him in North Alabama. He would only sell #1 and firsts and seconds. He must have thought he had some economic reason for this. Wright Ross has tried to figure it, but has come up with no solution. As he said, "Today the profit is in #3 common." I think it was a kind of impatience with the second-rate. Anything inferior or deeply flawed embarrassed him. He would look away or change the subject.

The Captain profited from this habit, until he began to lose some

of his fine chickens. He rigged up a contraption he thought would stop the thefts. He tied a string to the door and the other end to the trigger of a pistol aimed breast high, where any one entering would receive the bullet, an inch more or less either way. Guntersville was a river town then. Its streets were red clay and in a rainy season deep and heavy and slick. It lies between the river and Sand Mountain. It was pretty homespun. At first we lived in the West house on top of a hill behind the Oliver Day Streets and below it was the schoolhouse. It was a high perch but not too high for an occasional wildcat to cross the porch at night. Many evenings, sitting on the front verandah, my father, just to keep in practice, shot not the hickory nuts but the twigs which bound them to the tree. People in public matters had to help themselves. There was a bucket brigade in case of fire. If it happened at night, those nearby shot their pistols out of windows to arouse the town. One evening about chicken-stealing time shots rang out, as the saying is, from the direction of the depot. All who heard ran down to see who the culprit was and if the aim was right.

A rooster going to roost had landed on the string. The point was got across, however. This kind of familiarity with violence and death, the willingness to give and take it, is now gone. We understand death in a more abstract way. Hence we do not acknowledge it. A secular society accepting matter as the only truth must pretend that death doesn't really exist. Not believing in the hereafter but fearful, it tries to disguise the end of things. But we all know in our backbone that the impersonal must become personal. If we die along with a hundred million people, at the same instant, each of us dies alone. There was nothing impersonal about my father. We were not always in residence at Guntersville. A lumberman's life, certainly his kind, was unsettled. My mother preferred Murfreesboro. When we were away, he boarded at the hotel. If not the only, it was *the* hostelry at Guntersville and was owned and well run by Miss Bessie Samuels. I've forgotten whether Mr. Samuels was living then. Her son Tom was a tremendous man, gentle usually but in his frustration he could get violent. He tried to kill his mother one night. She had broken up a love affair of his, not on the true grounds but that the woman was unworthy. Miss Bessie

was big herself and raw-boned like a man and of good stock in that part of the country. She was cultivated as well, a learned woman in many ways and from being always at the behest of people longed for a farm which she finally got. This particular time she had rented the hotel to another, and my father's room was over that of the proprietor and his wife. One night he was kept awake by their quarrels. The next morning the man with some embarrassment apologized. My father's reply was, "I heard it all, and I want you to know that I took your wife's side." The man was pusillanimous; so he began to raise the rent. My father very quietly went to Miss Bessie and rented the hotel out from under him. He got a cantankerous bachelor, Mr. Galbreath (pronounced Gil), to run it.

When the boat came in in the late afternoon, everybody took hacks and went to the hotel. Frequently they had to stand in line, especially when Mr. Galbreath's meticulous hand moved slowly. His tone of voice in the usual questions was suspicious, as if nobody ought to be away from home. A young couple, obviously a bride and groom, came up to the desk. He meant to say do you want one bed, but he said, "Do you want to sleep with the woman?" They both blushed to the roots of their hair, and the boy-man blurted out, "Of course I do."

He kept the hotel cold in the winter, that is the rooms, and when people would complain, he would say, "My mother raised five healthy boys. We always undressed by the base burner and jumped into bed in cold rooms. It never hurt a one of us." He kept the eggs under the bed and doled them out on breakfast orders. When people asked for butter, he told them to try the gravy. My father, the invisible proprietor, would be at meals and overhear all the complaints. It was a matter of great humor for him, but not to Miss Bessie. The word got back to her and she took over the hotel again.

One of the times we were in Murfreesboro a man gave my father trouble. It had been long growing, for I remember driving out in the country with him and, as we passed a farm, a man, burly and swift, began to run across a field shouting us down. My father always drove fast horses; so we moved out of hearing. He made no comment. Later, as he was getting ready to go to Murfreesboro for the weekend, this

man confronted him at the depot. My father said, "Let me put my valise on the train and I'll talk with you." He stepped aboard and asked the Captain if he had a pistol. "I've two of them," the Captain replied. "I only need one." With this he went back outside and talked to the bully. And right behind him stood Captain Weaver, no pipe in mouth this time, for the occasion demanded formality, with the other pistol slightly lifted, en garde.

In her last days Grandma traveled among her children, or she went to the springs, a great place during the dog days for people to take a domestic leave, after laying-by time and before the gathering time. It was thought to drink the waters would flush the system. The air was salubrious and the fried chicken, great golden piles of it, mighty good. The guests of the house, Beard or Read or Horne, ate hearty and took walks before supper to work up an appetite or promenaded up and down the verandah or along the hidden lanes, not too distant lest they not hear the supper bell. There was always good conversation. Knitting pushed toward completion afghans and shawls and baby covers; and there were square dances and a few round dances in the evening. Mammy, then a widow, always opened the dance at Seven Springs with Judge Fite from Tullahoma for partner. They caged the bird, rung up the numbers; and she dearly loved to cheat and swing. Dressed always in white, with black slippers, she made a strong motherly figure. Instinctively she drew to her a young couple who had just run away and got married. As night fell, the young bride grew frightened. She refused to go with her husband to their room. Mammy comforted her. She said, and her voice indicated it was all right, "You've married one of them, and you'll have to go to bed with him." The bride looked down, her eyes listening. "I'll tell you what. You get in the bed first. Go over to the far side and turn your face to the wall. It will be all right." Next morning at breakfast, all smiles, the girl-bride embraced her counselor.

Seven Springs is in Smith County, not too far from McMinnville; and it had good water and water so black it would purge the bile from the most stubborn liver. An old widower of the neighborhood—this

story went the rounds a summer we were there—was notionate. He wanted him a young wife and he got one younger than his own children. He also bought him one of those new Talking Machines. The record he liked best was *Home Sweet Home*. No man knows his time. He did not live long to enjoy either acquisition. His will requested that the Talking Machine be brought to the edge of the grave and, after he was lowered and the dirt shoveled above him, there play his favorite song. It was thought his mind had turned at last to that true dwelling place in the life everlasting. As the disc rolled, a raucous voice came through the lily-shaped horn, "Good bye, my honey, I'm gone." The eldest son in his grief, no doubt, picked up the wrong record.

These springs have gone entirely out of fashion, along with farming and family reunions. White Sulphur in Virginia remains open, I'm told; and, until recent memory, Red Boiling Springs in Tennessee. Our family usually didn't travel too far in the summer, but once my grandfather Nelson took wife and children, with old P'niny as nurse for the youngest, to White Sulphur. He was a great shot, and there men practiced skeet shooting out of bird season. He went to White Sulphur chiefly to try his skill in this. His branch of the Nelsons, legend has it, were descended from Scotch Tom in Virginia; but his own grandfather, Thomas Nelson, came from North Carolina after the Revolution and settled near Alma in Rutherford County. Mamma's Nelsons came from Prince Edward County. Papa, however, went to Hampden-Sydney, studying medicine there. He failed, I think, to graduate because of tuberculosis. Actually it was asthma and complicated allergies he had inherited from his melancholic mother. When he married, it was said Molly Nelson would be a widow in six months.

Papa was a very extravagant man in his youth and given to gestures, such as building a dancing pavilion in his yard and hanging it with electric lights just then being made available for public and private use. They were not too bright to reveal closely the women's complexions; they must have given to the dancers a mystical quality. He loved beautiful things, and things rare and strange, and his taste was good. I heard him say he didn't have any sense until he was thirty, but he said it as one reproves himself for folly he regrets. At the time he was

trying to put some sense into a highly imaginative plan I had to own half of Alabama. It is curious what a child will remember. I couldn't have been more than four. Papa owned the light plant in Murfreesboro then, and he and his oldest son Hewlett were walking after supper to the office, where they were experimenting with lights going off and on. People should not denigrate children or patronize them, for I understood, naturally without language, the perfect amity and friendship which existed between this father and this son. It was in the tone of their speech, but most of all it was an equal fellowship of love and understanding, without restraint of elder and younger, or father and son. Hewlett was dead within the year.

The Tuckers were more familiar with White Sulphur. As everybody knows, they are an old and distinguished Virginia family and widely connected with historic names from Colonial days until now. They are much given to entering the Church, and to such public services as teaching and soldiering. I knew casually the Colonel Tucker who was grandson to General Albert Sidney Johnston. The Colonel had a marble bust of his grandfather in his house out from Lexington, about which he had mixed feelings. The sculptor had dressed the General in a Roman toga but had kept his nineteenth-century moustache. What worried the Colonel was the toga. It fell too low and revealed too much of a marble chest, which indeed was more bosom than chest. The Colonel's wife, Miss Mary, is a fine musician and at one time had taught the piano to Carson McCullers, whose gift apparently was equally sure in music.

But the Tuckers given to entering the Church were more frequently seen at Sewanee and have well served the University there. It is told about Sewanee that the first Mrs. Bishop Tucker was taking the waters at White Sulphur, and one morning after breakfast was rocking on the verandah. Nearby several young women, overdressed and loud of speech, were bemoaning what had happened to an acquaintance of theirs. The husband had bought a farm and furthermore was forcing his wife to live on it. This seemed to the women plain tyranny. Mrs. Tucker turned to them and said mildly that farm life was not all that unpleasant. Indeed, she said, she herself had been born on a farm. There was

a pause, as the ladies examined too closely her simple but impeccable garments. All civility, however, had not deserted them. "And where was that?" one of them asked.

"Mount Vernon," she replied.

In 1898 Grandma came to town to spend Christmas with Uncle Eph and Aunt Susie. She died there December the thirteenth. It was a cold season, and the silence of death settled over the house. Uncle Eph was poking the fire vigorously to bring a little warmth. His little boy Julian thought, "He is making so much noise he will wake up Grandma."

Squire Fletcher, her old and dear friend, died the next day. With these two deaths the old neighborhood of this branch of the family came to an end.

JIM FAULKNER

Auntee Owned Two

OXFORD, like many other small Southern towns, is built on a square with the courthouse in the middle, representing and keeping the records of the legal transactions of the people of the county. The distance of the county boundary line from the courthouse was determined by how far a man could ride a horse or his wagon from his farm leaving at daylight, get to town, tend to his business, and get back home before dark.

My family, or rather my family before me, came to Oxford long before the turn of the century. Grandfather was the first one that I knew. He had two sons, "Big Dad," who was really my grandfather, and Uncle John, and one daughter, "Auntee" (we pronounced it "Ant-Tea"). Big Dad was the oldest then came Auntee just a little younger, and last was Uncle John. And there was Uncle Ned, too, who was born a slave behind the big house on the same day as Grandfather, and they had belonged to each other since then.

Big Dad and Uncle John and Auntee, all, inherited quick tempers from Grandfather, and Auntee must have gotten more than her share. She caused a good many fights and was the reason Big Dad was shot in the back and mouth over in Pontotoc that time. Big Dad always said that if Auntee had been a man, somebody would have killed her before she was twenty-one years old. But as far as she was concerned, her family could do no wrong. She always looked after and took up for all

her children, as she called her child, grandchildren, nephews, grand-nephews, nieces, and grand-nieces.

Auntee wasn't very big in stature, but she was a giant in character and personality, and Nannie, my grandmother, was the same way. Auntee was the reason that Nannie met and married Big Dad.

Auntee and Nannie just had to be good friends, because if they hadn't been, all of Oxford and Lafayette County wouldn't have been big enough for both of them at the same time.

Auntee's husband died shortly after they were married and about the same time that Grandfather's wife died, so Auntee along with her small daughter moved back into the big house with Grandfather to look after him and run his house and everything and everybody else that came close to her. After that happened, Grandfather stayed around his bank and law office more than was necessary or than he was wanted, most of the time just to keep out of Auntee's way.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s the thing to do was to erect a statue of a Confederate Soldier on the town square in memory of all the men who had served the Lost Cause. Our town was no exception, but we have two monuments in our area instead of just the usual one, and it happened this way:

Grandfather told me about Auntee's two Confederate statues one summer night while we were sitting on the front porch after supper waiting for the house to cool off so we could go to bed. He was in his regular rocking chair and Uncle Ned was dozing in the chair that Grandfather kept behind him just for Uncle Ned. My seat was on the top step leaning against one of the white square porch columns, where I could watch him and still see out through the old cedar grove that was our front yard.

Auntee and Nannie were in the United Daughters of the Confederacy chapter in our town. They were not just in it either; they were the head of it and ran it to their complete satisfaction even when the other ladies in the club opposed them. They decided, or rather Auntee and Nannie decided, that since other towns honored their Southern Soldiers with a statue, that they would, too.

General Lee and General Forrest didn't think that these statues

should be put up, because the war was over and that was that, but they didn't know Nannie and Auntee. If they had been men, the outcome of the Big War would have been different. Auntee and Nannie never did consider that the war was over, though, let alone that we had lost it. When the carpetbaggers came down to reconstruct us, they didn't stay but twelve years, and that wasn't long enough to change Nannie and Auntee at all; so they just gave up and went on back home, that is the ones that Nannie and Auntee didn't convert to their way of thinking.

Anyway, Auntee and Nannie and their ladies raised the money, with Grandfather putting in a large share of it, being president and owner of the bank and a lawyer and all, and they ordered the statue.

Weeks went by and the statue didn't come. Auntee and Nannie had other things going to keep them and everybody else busy, so the statue sort of slipped into the background.

Once in a while Grandfather would get a little homesick for our folks over in Hayward County, North Carolina, and he would take some of the family with him for a few weeks visit. Well, as things worked out this time, Auntee and Nannie went with him, and as it would happen, the statue came while they were gone.

The rest of the ladies in Auntee's and Nannie's United Daughters of the Confederacy Club, thinking it would further cement relations between Oxford and the university located a mile west of our town square—and I'm sure, too, to get back at Auntee and Nannie for running their business, and besides that this is what they wanted to do with it in the first place—gave it to the university, and had it erected on the campus before Auntee and Nannie got back home from North Carolina.

Grandfather was telling me about all this that night, and it was funny to him then, but not when it actually happened. He said that they had been home from North Carolina a few days before Auntee found out that her statue had come and her ladies had already had it erected on the university campus. He said that Auntee and Nannie were out riding in the buggy with Chess driving those two black matched stallions (Chess was Grandfather's driver; that is, he was only Grandfather's driver when Auntee decided that she didn't need him) when she saw the monument. Her first thought was that somebody had slipped

behind her back and had been first to put up a Confederate statue in her area. Then it dawned on her that it was her statue, and that really set her off.

Grandfather said that he just knew he could have heard her bellow all the way to town, if he had just had his office window open. He wasn't long in hearing her, though, sure enough. Uncle Ned was sitting on a little wooden bench just outside the bank door that Grandfather kept there for him, and he was the first to see the two black stallions burst into the square in a full gallop pulling that bouncing buggy full of Auntee and Nannie and leaving a cloud of boiling dust. Chess was about half standing up hanging onto the lines trying to keep the stallions from running right on through and out the other side of the town square, and Auntee was about half standing up, too, poking Chess in the back with her parasol yelling for him to go faster.

Uncle Ned hustled through the front door of the bank and on past the tellers' windows to the back where Grandfather had his office to warn him about Auntee's coming; then went out the back door to find something to do to keep himself out of Auntee's way, when she hit the bank like he knew she would do when she was acting like that. The tellers and clerks couldn't get out, when she came in hunting Grandfather, but they always managed to busy themselves as far from Auntee's path as they could, especially when she was on the warpath about something, and today she was, and they could tell.

Grandfather said that Auntee came in that day like a whirlwind, tapping the floor with the end of her folded-up parasol every step she took right up to his desk.

She slammed the parasol on Grandfather's desk and demanded, "Pappy, who in the hell gave my statue to those people out there?"

Grandfather said that sometimes he had to out-Auntee Auntee herself, and this was one of those times. So he didn't answer right off; just sat there.

He leaned around the corner of his desk and let fly a stream of tobacco juice at the spittoon, then looked up at Auntee still standing there fuming and demanded back, "How in the hell could I know anything like that without you already knowing it first?"

Auntee whirled around and stomped and parasol-tapped her way out the door muttering, "I damn sure will find out who in the hell did what, and somebody will either move that one to town or get me another one just like it."

Uncle Ned, hearing Auntee leave as did everybody else, poked his head around Grandfather's office door and asked, "Marse Bill, is we gonna go ta thu house fur dinna now dat Missy done got herself all lathered up?"

Grandfather thought a minute and said, "No, you'd better step next door to Buck's store and fetch us some cheese and crackers. We'll let her calm down some, then go home about supper time."

But Auntee didn't calm down; in fact, she had the whole house and the biggest part of the neighborhood treed by the time Grandfather and Uncle Ned got there, even though they did wait longer than usual to go home.

Uncle Ned saw the mood Auntee was in just as soon as he and Grandfather got in sight of her; so he made his way to the kitchen and Minnie, the cook, before Auntee could unload any of her wrath on him, but Grandfather caught it all.

She was really mad about hers and Nannie's statue that they had planned to be erected on the courthouse lawn, being given away and already up before she knew anything about it, or even getting any credit for it from those people out there, as she called the folks that were connected with the school.

That night supper was quieter than usual with the silence broken only by Auntee's muttering, "It's my statue and they gave it to those people out there, and I'm gonna get it back or have another one just like that one."

Grandfather said that the only thing he could do at a time like that was to keep his mouth shut, because if he said anything at all, he knew it would be wrong; so he finished his supper and folded his napkin in a triangle like he always did, and went to his rocking chair on the front porch.

He had just settled back with his feet propped up on the banister rail and a fresh plug of tobacco in the side of his mouth to watch the

town go to sleep, when Auntee came out the front door still stomping and parasol-tapping.

Grandfather said he looked at Auntee, then at the parasol, then back at Auntee, and said, "Missy, wherever you are going, its first dark now and you won't need that parasol to keep the sun off."

Auntee stopped half way down the steps and stopped stomping, but she didn't stop parasol-tapping, and said to Grandfather, "It doesn't look like you are going to do a damn thing about my statue, so I am. I'll either get that one back or they will get me another one just like it. I already had a place picked out for it on the south side of the courthouse yard with it facing down South Street towards this house, and besides that I don't use this parasol just to keep the sun off."

Grandfather said to himself, "I don't doubt that at all," as he watched Auntee stomp and parasol-tap down the wooden sidewalk in the direction of Nannie's house; and he said that he hoped, too, that nobody, 'specially one of those people from out there, would be unfortunate enough to be caught in her path that night.

The next morning at breakfast Grandfather thought that things might have calmed down a bit, but Auntee's eyes were still flashing, and she was still saying, "It's mine and I'm going to have it or one just like it."

Grandfather said that about that time he had had enough, and he knew it wouldn't get any better; so he slammed his hand and napkin down on the table so hard that it made the dishes and silverware jump and clatter, and told Auntee that if she would just shut up about it, he would buy her a damn statue and she could set it any damn place she damn well pleased.

Auntee took Grandfather at his word. She was in the bank that morning before he had a chance to get settled good, and asked, "Where is the money for my other statue?"

Grandfather looked up at that and said, "By G— now you are going to own two of them. Go ahead and order it. I'll pay for it when it comes."

Well, Auntee did order the statue that day, and she didn't let its arrival slip up on her this time. She kept in close touch with the maker and the railroad, so that nobody could put anything over on her again.

The station agent at the railroad depot said that if that monument didn't come soon, he would either get transferred or he would just have to quit. He said that Auntee acted like it was all his fault each day when the train came in and her statue wasn't on it.

Well, the statue finally did come in one morning, and the railroad man had no sooner unloaded it from the boxcar into the freight wagon than Auntee and Nannie appeared with all their ladies—whether they liked it or not, and most of them didn't—to stand around paying tribute to the symbol of the memory of the boys in gray from our county who had given their all for our cause, and if some of them hadn't given their all, Auntee would have seen to it that they did.

The trip to the town square was solely directed by Auntee, and the wagon carrying the statue was escorted by her ladies, again whether they wanted to or not, because they were directed by Auntee, too, just like the driver of the wagon was.

The concrete foundation had already been poured on the south lawn of the courthouse, also at Auntee's direction and sat just waiting for the monument. When the procession reached the courthouse yard, most of the business men along the route and on the square, the courthouse people, and nearly everybody else in sight gathered around to help, not direct because they knew that Auntee would do that, but to actually help get the statue upright on its foundation.

When it was up and in place, Auntee backed off and stood with her left hand on her hip and her right hand resting on her parasol looking up at the life-size Confederate Soldier standing on top of the twenty foot pedestal looking down South Street towards Grandfather's house, one knee slightly bent in an easy standing position, with his rifle butt between his feet and both hands resting on the barrel.

He stood there atop the marble pedestal with the engraving on the base:

IN MEMORY OF
THE PATRIOTISM OF THE
CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS
OF LAFAYETTE COUNTY
MISSISSIPPI

THEY GAVE THEIR LIVES
IN A JUST AND HOLY CAUSE

And they should have added: ERECTED BY AUNTEE AND NANNIE.

Grandfather said that they just had to have a dedication ceremony to make the monument official and everlasting, and somebody had to make a speech. He said that he couldn't let Auntee do everything and be the whole show, because she was hard enough to get along with just being most of it, so he told Nannie that she would have to do it.

That suited Nannie just fine, because she figured she was still fighting the Big War, anyway, and this would give her the opportunity to fire another shot for her cause.

They picked a Saturday afternoon in August after laying-by time, so all the folks from out in the county would be in town for the big event.

Auntee and Nannie saw to it that they built a wooden platform big enough for a speaker's stand and the local band, and Grandfather saw to it that it was big enough for the town fathers, too. After all it was their land that the statue would use forever, and Grandfather thought that Auntee and Nannie should show them some small bit of acknowledgment, whether they wanted to or not.

Well, the big day came. The monument was covered with Confederate flags that would fall away at just the right time when Uncle Ned, who had been delegated this particular part of the ceremony, pulled the string at Nannie's signal, revealing the Soldier staring south over the crowd down South Street towards Grandfather's house. The platform below the statue was gaily decorated, and the band was playing "The Yellow Rose of Texas" and all the Southern songs. The square

was packed with grown-ups and children and dogs and horses and mules. The grown-ups were listening to the band and talking about their crops, the children were chasing each other, the dogs were fighting, and the horses and mules were just standing in the shade switching flies. At just the right time, the band struck-up "Dixie." The men cheered, and the women cried, and I guess some of the men had tears, too, because some of them were old enough to remember it all and why.

When the band stopped, it was Nannie's time. She stomped across the platform to the speaker's stand, and gave the signal to Uncle Ned who was holding the string attached to the flags that were covering the statue. He gave it a good healthy jerk and the flags drifted down and away from the Confederate Soldier and settled at the base of the monument.

Nannie looked up at the statue, then back at the crowd. Her eyes were flashing black now.

She pointed upwards at the soldier. She was still looking at the crowd, and her eyes were still black and flashing and said, "If I had my way about it, that Soldier wouldn't be facing South, and his gun wouldn't be at rest."

And with that Nannie whirled and went back to her seat beside Auntee.

Auntee reached over and patted Nannie's hand and said, "You are right, Sis Maud, you are so right."

The Agrarian Symposium

LETTERS OF ALLEN TATE AND DONALD DAVIDSON,
1928-1930

EDITED BY JOHN TYREE FAIN AND
THOMAS DANIEL YOUNG

INTRODUCTION

After four years in New York earning his living as a book reviewer and free-lance journalist, Allen Tate received a Guggenheim fellowship and was able to live from September, 1928, to December, 1929, in Europe. Shortly after his arrival there, he wrote Donald Davidson of his first impressions of England and France, particularly of the important literary figures he met: L. A. G. Strong, Herbert Read, and T. S. Eliot in England and, in France, Julian Greene, Morley Callaghan, Sylvia Beach, and Ernest Hemingway. Back in Nashville, Davidson—who in 1927 had published The Tall Men, *his second book of verse—reviewed Tate's first book,* Mr. Pope and Other Poems *(1928), for the very successful bookpage he had conducted in the Nashville* Tennesseean *since 1924. At this time Davidson complained that he was at loose ends, accomplishing little beyond that required "to live and support a family." But Davidson's letter of February 5, 1929, introduced a topic which for the next decade received a major portion of the creative energy of both men. In the exchange of letters of the next two years one can trace the development of the Agrarian symposium* I'll Take My Stand, *from the tentative proposals in Davidson's letter of February 5, 1929, through Tate's detailed plan of procedure in his letter of August 10, 1929, to the difference of opinion over the title of the proposed volume after it had gone to press.*

The sequence of letters given here is selected from the volume The Literary Correspondence of Allen Tate and Donald Davidson *edited by John Tyree Fain and Thomas Daniel Young, to be published next year by the University of Georgia Press.*—JOHN TYREE FAIN and THOMAS DANIEL YOUNG

The selection of letters from *The Literary Correspondence of Allen Tate and Donald Davidson* in this issue of *The Southern Review* is published with the permission of Allen Tate and Mrs. Donald Davidson. Their kindness is gratefully acknowledged.

ALLEN TATE AND DONALD DAVIDSON

Letters, 1928-1930

London, Oct. 24, 1928

Dear Don:—I had barely recovered from the effects of our stormy passage when the treacherous British climate betrayed me, and I came down with the "flu." I am up today for the first time since last Friday. I have seen very little—Westminster Abbey, St. Magnus the Martyr, the Temple. We have been to Oxford; it is far beyond expectations. I shall not write you my impressions of it; suffice it that we are going there to stay for six weeks. I believe I can work there. Red is curious but not yet happy;[1] I think he may be. On the whole none of us seems to like England. The men seldom speak, and when they do, they usually say something unpleasant. The women are appalling. Great God! What feet and ankles! And their eyes look like fishes'. I begin to see the use of British Imperialism. It is something for the men to be so devoted to that they are willing even to mate with the awful women, in order to give sons to the Empire. I have conceived a respectful sympathy for Oscar Wilde.

Well, my impressions, are, as you see, frivolous and muddled; yet if I were not done in by the flu I should certainly be having a good time. You don't need to like a place to enjoy it. In fact, I feel about Europe as most Americans, if they are honest, must feel—erroneously

[1] Robert Penn Warren (known to his friends as "Red") has his Rhodes Scholarship and is already at Oxford when Tate arrives there.

or not: I can't help feeling quite superior to most of the people I meet. I don't mean in any personal sense. I can explain it only in this way: the English seem to be living against a background that is much too large for them. I am sure that no one who is not a confirmed democrat could make this observation. You can not tell immediately whether an Englishman's integrity is his own or the common integrity. This has its advantages; but it is perplexing. There is the curious impression that I get from the intelligent Englishmen I have met, that they feel a certain remoteness from their own past almost as deep as the breach that we feel as transplanted Europeans. This is true beyond question. The inference to be drawn is vast; so I leave it to you.

I have met most of the people who are behind the Criterion, and I like them all. Herbert Read is the best mind in England. (Remember ten years from now that I said this). Eliot, of course, was due to be the most interesting, but he is a Sphinx and you can't tell much about him: not that his mystery is a pose. He can't help it. He is really a nice man, and most amiable. I expected to see a small man with an extremely intellectual face, yet lacking those features which signify Will. As a matter of fact, put into 17th century clothes, he would look like a New England Divine—which he really is. I should say that his character, far from being weak, is almost overdeveloped. It is both amusing and impressive to observe the attitude of the English towards him. It is almost worship, and it contains no reservation. I witnessed a curious scene. The other day at lunch he had to leave early; the moment he left, the others burst into spontaneous tribute to him. It was ludicrous and it was affecting. There is something very American about Eliot's whole procedure, and I like it. He came here unknown and without influence. In fifteen years he has become the undisputed literary dictator of London. What I like is that he doesn't seem to feel the rôle.

I am written out for the moment. Please write me when you can. You can't imagine how welcome messages from America are just now. I am by no means so diverted that I can do without them. I may add that I shall never be. Carolyn joins me in best regards. Remember me to Jesse [Wills] and John [Crowe Ransom].—Yours always, Allen.

Feb. 5, 1929

Dear Allen:—I have been a long time writing you, and I'm grieved —have long been grieved—at my absurd delay. It is absurd because my life has become quite absurd. It is without pith. It is given up altogether to mercenary pursuits. I teach classes and I edit a book page, both things being done in order to live and to support a family; and, completing the circle, apparently I live and support a family in order to teach classes and to edit a book page. In such a scheme of things there has been no room for letters (other than strictly business), for poetry, for thought, for decency. I suppose I am as near as I ever was to being a lost soul. For all reasonable and intelligent purposes, I am now no more than that—just a lost soul. The only thing that makes me think I am not quite altogether a lost soul is that I recognize the absurdity of my condition and am dissatisfied with it. And out of this discontent I ask your pardon for a long wait in writing. I assure you that all the time I have thought of you with the semi-buried part of my mind—which is to say that you have never been out of the part of my thought that is really vital.

Another reason why I didn't write you is that I have been ashamed. I have waited so long to review your book. I didn't have the face to write to you until it was reviewed. My review is enclosed.[2] It will appear next Sunday, in a slightly modified form. In partial excuse I may say that first I had thought to get Red to review your poems; but he proved to be inaccessible. Then I solicited Jesse; and he was chary of attempting the task; perhaps he didn't feel himself equal to it. Next I asked Ransom, and he at first consented. But on further thought, and after studying your book, he decided he wouldn't. I think he felt that if he reviewed it, he would, despite sundry positive admirations for your writing, have to take strong issue with you, and in such a case, it seemed to him that it ill befitted good friends to show their differences in public. Well, then, there was no one else. I had to do it,—and though I would have preferred to have passed the task to somebody else, especially because of our close relation and because I reviewed your Stonewall so favor-

[2] Davidson's review of *Mr. Pope and Other Poems* appeared February 10, 1929.

ably, nevertheless I took a real pleasure in turning my energies, such as they are, to the difficult business. But I wanted to do it when I felt at my best—weak as that is. I was surprised to find myself defending your poetry in a large measure; I don't know whether you will be surprised or not. You will see that I did you the courtesy to avoid a great many of the ordinary cliches of reviewing. Instead of comparing you to Hart Crane or Louis Untermeyer, I chose to compare you with Milton and Tennyson, partly because I thought they represented a standard by which you would prefer to be measured. Also, I found I had no space for reference to particular poems and phases of your style. I had to discuss you altogether in order to say anything very effective. Thus it happened that many things I might have said could not go in. Yet, though my review is vastly insufficient to the book itself, as I well recognize, I am foolish enough to believe it is a juster review than Winters' in the N. R.[3] Why in God's name does he give himself such authoritarian airs? The solemn ponderosity of his utterances is worthy of a Methodist bishop. I hope you'll tell him I said so.

Your letter from London gave me an excellent foretaste of what I'm hoping to hear from you, when you have gotten entirely over the Flu and are quite well acclimated. I enjoyed all you had to say, especially your impressions of (1) Englishwomen; (2) Eliot; (3) Read—two of whose books have just come into my hands. I don't deserve long talkative letters, sinner that I am; but with a sinner's faith I hope you'll write them, in order that I may know just how Europe strikes you and how the magnum opus moves along. Merrill has given me your Paris address, and so I suppose that you are staying in Paris awhile to get the pulse of the literary world there, as well as to soak up Paris. Will you be moving on soon, to South France, where the weather is more benign (I know what French winters are like), or to some provincial city (like Dijon) where one can live unmolested, or even to Germany?

All of us have read with extraordinary interest your article in The Bookman[4] (Is this a descent for you, or an ascent for The BkMan). My reaction is briefly: all your generalizations are very good indeed,

[3] *New Republic* (October 17, 1928).

[4] Tate's essay "American Poetry Since 1920" appeared in *Bookman* (January, 1929).

but most of your particularities are dangerous, reflecting your aversions and obsessions too closely. So, while nobody has written so well about poetry in many years, you are open to attack in your references to poets. All the same, it is a relief to have your courageous frontal approach rather than the devious effusions and politenesses so common nowadays.

There is little news to give, but such as there is I will try to sum it up. Ransom's book on aesthetics is taking a final shape;[8] it will not be, however, a thorough and definitive work, but a looser, less formal study than he had at first planned. Last Saturday night at [The] Fugitive meeting, he read a very brilliant paper—about an hour long—in which he gives an exciting new turn to his familiar dualism. Now he is dallying with a masculine-feminine principal in literature, and, if I am any judge, with great conviction and force. Nobody else among the Fugitives is doing anything worth note, except Merrill [Moore], who is still trying to find a publisher, and Mr. Frank, who suddenly burst out with several poems, better than anything he has yet done. I am doing no writing except hack writing, but I am now definitely committed to plans for a complete summer to do with as I please. I shall go away somewhere, leaving the book page to hired help. The end of it, if all results well, will be some sort of a book. One can't resist the publishers. They have hungry scouts in the field, looking for Southern authors. At least three publishers have been after me—well, mildly after me. Marshall Best, of the Viking Press, seems extra anxious.

I wish you would write to Jesse in your very best vein. The good old boy, I greatly fear, is much besieged with family troubles. I know nothing definite, but I have the constant feeling that Jesse lives under domestic pressure which we can hardly imagine. If his situation were not as it is, I feel that he might energetically have taken hold of the Fugitive Press idea, about which we have talked at some length this fall and winter. As things stand now, I believe it is not practicable, for the simple reason that there is nobody who is free to devote himself to it with all his heart. But it is an idea that I favor very much. Only, I should go much further. I favor a fully financed Southern magazine, openly provincial; associated with this magazine, a publishing house of

[8] Tentatively entitled "The Third Moment," this book was never published.

a distinct sort; and associated with the whole enterprise, a chain of bookstores, to serve as a distributing medium. Such an enterprise, of course, calls for millions—plenty of which are in the U. S. But how to get hold of them, that's the thing. I am an impossible visionary, but I should dearly like to get embarked on some grand enterprise that had only a fighting chance of success.

This leads me to speak of what is to be done in the South, anyway? My impression is that the people who are of your opinion and mine and John's about things Southern are few and far between, and furthermore of little influence. If there were a Southern magazine, intelligently conducted and aimed specifically, under the doctrine of provincialism, at renewing a certain sort of sectional consciousness and drawing separate groups of Southern thought together, something might be done to save the South from civilization. The great trouble is that there is no such magazine in sight, and, still worse, there is no real issue strong enough to renew or create the conception of Southern life for which I think we could argue. Economics, government, politics, machinery—all such forces are against us. With the issue of prosperity before everybody's eyes, Southerners get excited about nothing else—except religion; it was religion and prosperity that beat Al Smith and broke the Solid South. Where can we join up, with our mysterious doctrine of provincialism? Still, I believe in agitating. The losing cause is not always the better one, but it is in this case.

Ransom, Wade, and I have been trying to get up a symposium on Southern matters, but without success so far. Of the people we approached, only one, Gerald Johnson,* answered, and his answer showed that he didn't understand what we were talking about. You were on our list of prospective contributors. Will you come across with something, if we revive the project?

No doubt, at a great Trans-Atlantic distance, you are getting an entirely new perspective (dear word, beloved of liberals). You are finding out what is American as well as what's European. Well, let's have the straight stuff, old-timer. Best wishes, as always, in all things, and

* At this time Gerald White Johnson was on the staff of the Baltimore *Evening Sun*.

regards and cheers to all members of the Tatian Expeditionary Force, who I trust are all well and happy.—Faithfully, Don

32 rue de Vaugirard, Paris, VI, February 18, 1929

Dear Don:—Your excellent letter of the 5th and the super-excellent review came today to raise my spirits, which have been uncommonly low. We have been through a dreadful siege of the flu, from which I alone came off well, and the cold weather (around zero Fahrenheit) takes all the Europe out of our lives because it keeps us bound to the grate fire. I am afraid you see me having a great time absorbing French life and learning much from the French writers. I see but little of the French, writers or citizens; though warm weather may give me some social impulses. We came from Oxford on Thanksgiving Day. Except for Warwick Castle and Stratford we saw in England only Oxford and London; in France only Paris. I have been so swamped with illness and the desire to get some work done that I haven't felt like seeing any one or anything.

First, your review is the most intelligent I have yet had, and provided that it isn't keyed up too high (both in praise and censure) it analyzes my virtues and defects as they have never been analyzed before. The charge of Expressionism is a most acute thrust. I think there is a reason why most of us are Expressionists (you are one) against our will, and this reason is the proper subject of modern critical speculation; though of course it has no place in a review. All the Fugitives are unwilling Expressionists simply because to write poetry at all these days we must violate the current meanings of words with our own personalities; the current meanings of words are President Coolidge's, as you imply, and they are debased. When we use a word we use it two ways; for the sake of communication we take hold of it first in the current sense, then recharge it with the value that it ought to have. This describes your method as well as mine, and it describes Ransom's better than either. I think John is quite right about not wishing to air the differences we must all feel; the public never understands the philosophical intention of such disagreements, and takes it to mean that we think

our colleagues are no good. For this reason, when I reviewed John's Two Gentlemen in Bonds, I suppressed the abstract reservations I feel about his poetry, and issued a public statement; more and more I believe that this is the correct procedure for reviewing. Reviewing is propaganda for the best current production, and it can never be more than that unless the public is better educated. I am not prepared to say when that will be. In the present state of things, if I reviewed you and John in a high way, showing perhaps that you both fall short of Dante, the public, fed by Louis Untermeyer, would suppose that I meant you were inferior to Elinor Wylie. Therefore, reviewing John, I pointed out that his distinction is not surpassed by any contemporary poet in America; which is perfectly true.

Your recent depression is not the peculiar property of your environment, as I see it; though it may be due to your special reaction to that special environment. All places are equally the wrong places. We are all at present doomed to live a harrowing life, and it may or may not be more harrowing than the lives of all men everywhere who have tried to find some ultimate discipline of the soul. It was just as hard to attain to salvation in the 13th century as it is now (perhaps harder), although the results of the quest in literature were grander and more coherent. That was largely because salvation was common, not personal. I would like some time to talk to you at length about this—it is not the kind of thing you can talk about in short visits. I am more and more heading towards Catholicism. We have reached a condition of the spirit where no further compromise is possible. That is the lesson taught us by the Victorians who failed to unite naturalism and the religious spirit; we've got to do away with the one or the other; and I can never capitulate to naturalism. What Babbitt and More and, recently, Foerster call humanism is impossible; for humanism at any time is simply a derivative of the main faith of the age; and our main faith being naturalism, humanism must be naturalistic also. The humanism of the Renaissance was better because it was still energized by the Church. (I am at present writing, at Eliot's solicitation, an essay on modern humanists from this point of view.)[1] In other words, the modern humanists, however they

[1] "The Fallacy of Humanism," *Criterion* (July, 1929).

try, cannot, without religion, get rid of the monistic assumptions of naturalism; without a clean break between the natural and the supernatural humanism commits suicide. It can't be both monistic and dualistic, and unless it espouses religion (which it refuses to do) it must cling to science which is monistic. There is no dualism without religion, and there is no religion without a Church; nor can there be a Church without dogma. Protestantism is virtually naturalism; when morality lacks the authority of dogma, it becomes private and irresponsible, and from this it is only a step to naturalism. Even two generations ago this was not as clear as it is now. The forms of impersonal and authoritative conduct remained in the characters of Protestants, but without the external authority good conduct cannot last; it becomes, as it did in Henry James, merely "gentlemanly feeling" which is not enough to keep in control those who lack it. So on and so on.

I am sorry to hear that Jesse is feeling low. I wrote to him from Oxford, but I have not received a reply. It would probably take more money than Jesse could afford to put all your schemes on foot; but a little would be better than nothing. At the outset, of course, the question of "lost causes" would come up. There is no such thing as a lost cause. There are permanent forms of truth which, under the varying conditions of time and place, may be made pertinent. Our time and place would require the adjustment of these truths to our provincial history. The trouble is that Americans are afraid of any idea of which the immediate fruition in action is not clear. Any coherent point of view, whether it have any chance of practical success or not, becomes a valuable instrument of criticism. The chief virtue of such a stand is to make contemporary abuses stand forth for what they are. By finding good in a little of everything, as the modern liberal does, you find no good in anything. No cause is lost so long as it can sustain a few people in the formulation of truths.

To return to your review—which I like without reservation. One of your best points concerns the quality of traditional poetry. The people who opposed the Fugitives as radicals would oppose, certainly, such a poem as Lycidas if it appeared in a modern journal. Tradition is the intensest expression, or communication, the past has reached.

This is always difficult. What most people mean by tradition is the debased and diluted version of the great masters which the second rate poets have passed on. Like Tennyson. It is worthy of remark that the only Victorian poet who is in the great tradition (Arnold) is put aside for Browning and Tennyson. These latter give the reader all the illusion of reading poetry, without forcing him to extend himself to the great effort of reading poetry itself. It is almost as difficult to read poetry as it is to write it. I find it so, and so should the reader, I believe, who is a little less practiced at it than I am. I need only to add that my poetry is not necessarily in the great tradition because it is found difficult. I have played the sedulous ape to certain masters, but I hope not merely to dilute what they say. As to Lycidas again, it is certainly one of the most difficult poems ever written; I read it first when I was about fourteen years old, and in certain ways I understand it as little as I did then; and I must have read it three or four hundred times. . . .

I have written some new poems, and written about seven hundred lines on the long poem. The latter isn't much good, though parts of it are. Jeff Davis was put aside in the fall; he has been resumed; but he will not be out this spring. Eliot has tempted me into a by-path wherein I am committed to give him the essay on the Humanists by April first; he asked me to apply to them the ideas in my essay on Emily Dickinson—which in a longer and more closely argued version he is printing in June.[8] I wish John would send him some chapters of his book;[9] John's thought and Eliot's run along the same line; in fact, if John's book is what I think it is, it leads right up to religion, whither Eliot has been bound all the time. Ransom and Eliot are more alike than any other two people alive; I have always suspected this, now I am convinced. It is very hard for me to distinguish the influences they have had on me; they merge. It is quite proper, and quite amusing, that John from the beginning seems to have had an instinctive dislike of Eliot. The poetry of both is highly original; it is very much alike. . . . —Allen

P. S. I read Winters a lecture on his review. If you have any extra pages containing yours, I would appreciate receiving them—2 or 3.

[8] This version was first published in *Symposium* (April, 1932).
[9] *God Without Thunder* (1930).

Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, N. Y., July 29, 1929

Dear Allen:—A note from Merrill Moore reminds me—as I have been reminding myself, without effect—that I haven't written you in a long time. I have had your letter of the winter past on my desk for months: it is on my table now, for I brought it with me here. I never could seem to get time to write the answer it deserved. Besides, I am always ashamed when I write to you and, in less degree, to other old friends, because I have been doing so little to justify my existence and you have been doing so much.

I especially wanted to say to you, after I got your letter, that you simply *must not* be as gloomy as your letter seemed to indicate you might be. Surely you must not, like Eliot, give up the ghost in favor of a combination of classic-Anglo-Catholic-Conservative, principally because that combination (good as it may be) isn't good enough for you, however much its elements may attract you, or even serve your poetical purposes now and then. I, too, am attracted somewhat toward Catholicism, as toward High Church Episcopalianism. But I like better to be tied up with no church at all. I find myself more repelled than attracted by all clergymen and priests. If it were not for them, possibly I could become something-or-other in a religious way. As matters stand, I seem to be bothered less by religious matters than by anything else. Maybe I'm just an animal after all. At any rate, I do agree that Babbitt's "humanism" is very weakish in omitting religion—but that's purely an intellectual statement of the matter to me.

I hope very much that you will soon complete your labors and return to the States—incidentally and (for selfish reasons) principally, to visit Nashville also. God knows (I say it with all the piety I can manage) I need the conversations with you that you mentioned in your letters as wished-for. More especially, your services are badly needed in a big fight which I foresee in the immediate future.

It is this. For several months, with the partial and somewhat hesitating encouragement of Ransom, I have been agitating the project of a collection of views on the South, not a general symposium, but a group of openly partisan documents, centralizing closely around the ideas that

you, Ransom, & I all seem to have in common. It would deal with phases of the situation such as the Southern tradition, politics, religion, art, etc., but always with a strong bias toward the self-determinative principle. It would be written by native Southerners of our mind—a small, coherent, highly selected group, and would be intended to come upon the scene with as much vigor as is possible—would even, maybe, call for *action* as well as ideas.

I enclose a prospectus of this scheme, very tentative, and also enclose a comment by Gorham Munson, whom I found here at Yaddo, and who now has a connection with Doubleday-Doran and is holding out very strong lures of publication. (MacMillan & Scribner are prospects, too)

But I also enclose a copy of a letter from Howard Mumford Jones[10] which just reached me and is self-explanatory. It upset me!

You will see, after reading it, what is before us. If Jones, whom I like and respect in many ways, put his scheme on foot, the "progressive" note will be accented very much, I greatly fear. You can imagine, for instance, what a man like Odum[11] would have to say about the Negro question. For us, the issue is: Will we let the Progressives (some of whom are "immigrant" Southerners) capture the field and walk off with public opinion. But they have great strength on their side—prestige, resources, etc. They can get eminent contributors. They may even cut the ground out from under us.

I was astounded at Jones' letter and gave him, for the time being, a non-committal answer, inquiring from what point of view the symposium was to be prepared. I secretly (but maybe unjustly) suspect that he is taking this method of letting me know that he has found out our scheme and is forestalling us—perhaps being a little put out that he himself had not been consulted or asked to enter, as he would not have been. But this is pure speculation.

I'm therefore asking you (keeping Jones' letter confidential) to write me your opinion and to indicate whether, if we should launch our

[10] At this time Howard Mumford Jones was a professor of English at the University of North Carolina.

[11] Howard Odum, sociologist at the University of North Carolina and author of *Southern Regions* (1936).

own ship of ideas, you would contribute and what you would propose, in special and in general. I am much hampered by the uncertainty of my own mind, by lack of knowledge of possible contributors, and by a certain hesitancy on the part of Ransom, which, I fear, might be duplicated in others. If within the next three months, there doesn't develop a clear possibility of getting the project under way, I'll prefer to drop it, for the time being. But I'd like to make a fight, and I'd like to have your advice & help. In fact, if you were on the ground, I'd propose that you should be editor of the project. I would have written you before if things had not been nebulous in the extreme. . . . —Regards to Carolyn.—Faithfully, Don

Address: Guaranty Trust Co., 4, Place de la Concorde, Paris,
August 10, 1929

Dear Don:—Yours of the 29th is just here. My delight is best witnessed by the speed of my taking up pen and ink.

I have recently had news of your activities in behalf of a Southern movement. Ransom sent me a letter of yours to him and enclosed Munson's very acute remarks on his essay. All this is in full agreement with my own views.

The other day I wrote to Warren, and suggested the following tactical program:

1. The formation of a society, or an academy of Southern *positive* reactionaries made up at first of people of our own group.

2. The expansion in a year or two of this academy to this size: fifteen active members—poets, critics, historians, economists—and ten inactive members—lawyers, politicians, private citizens—who might be active enough without being committed at first to direct agitation.

3. The drawing up of a philosophical constitution, to be issued and signed by the academy, as the groundwork of the movement. It should be ambitious to the last degree; it should set forth, under our leading idea, a complete social, philosophical, literary, economic and religious system. This will inevitably draw upon our heritage, but this heritage should be valued, not in what it actually performed, but in its

possible perfection. Philosophically we must go the whole hog of reaction, and base our movement less upon the actual old South than upon its prototype—the historical social and religious scheme of Europe. We must be the last Europeans—there being no Europeans in Europe at present.

4. The academy will not be a secret order: all the cards will be on the table. We should be *secretive*, however, in our tactics, and plan the campaign for the maximum of effect. All our writings should be signed "John Doe, of the ———— ————," or whatever we call it.

5. Organized publication should be looked to. A newspaper perhaps, to argue our principles on the lower plane; then a weekly, to press philosophy upon the passing show; and third, a quarterly devoted wholly to principles. This is a large scheme, but it must be held up constantly. We must do our best with what we can get.

The advantages of this program are the advantages of all extreme positions. It would immediately define the muddling and *unorganized* opposition (*intellectually* unorganized) of the Progressives: they have no *philosophical* program, only an emotional acquiescence to the drift of the age, and we should force them to rationalize into absurdity an intellectually untenable position. Secondly, it would crystallize into opposition or complete allegiance the vaguely pro-Southern opinions of the time. These two advantages of my proposed academy seem to me decisive. Without the academy we shall perish in two ways: (1) under the superior weight of metal (not superior strategy) of the enemy (Progressive); and (2) our own doctrine will be diluted with too many shades of opinion.

In short, this program would *create an intellectual situation interior to the South.* I underscore it because, to me, it contains the heart of the matter.

For the great ends in view—the end may be only an assertion of principle, but that in itself is great—for this end we must have a certain discipline; we must crush minor differences of doctrine under a single idea. I suggest a repudiation of Jefferson and a revised restatement of the South Carolina idea. We shall never refute Progress

with the doctrine of a man whose negative side made Progress possible. Jefferson's system (!) was made to oppose an illusory monarchy in the U. S. In short we cannot merely fight centralization; we must envisage a centralization of a different and better kind. In fact, we must here oppose one of the ideas of the Southern tradition. Emotionally this does me considerable violence because I am, emotionally, a Jeffersonian. This is what I mean by discipline.

Another and greater Southern movement foundered on indiscipline of ideas. I refer to the Montgomery Convention of February, 1861. Study it and take warning. Those men *felt*, but they would not *think* through habits and political inertia. The Montgomery Convention lost us the war. There was no one to tell them the logical consequences of their position. We must take logic to the most extreme ends, and then perform what we can.

Jones' proposal is amusing and a little annoying. It demonstrates the need of our academy. If it existed now, one of two things or both would happen: his symposium would be largely written with our announced program as a background; we should be able to pigeon-hole it and effectively neutralize its influence by a fusillade of *academy* reviews. *Organization and discipline are indispensable.*

By this time you've seen my essay on the Humanists. We shall have to refer to these fellows pretty often. Their difficulty is that they are trying to refute Progress merely with anti-Progress—or Naturalism with mere anti-Naturalism. Munson puts his finger precisely on our advantage over them.

The publication of a manifesto would relieve any one person of the responsibility for what his colleagues say, but it would not keep the natural leader as leaders of the movement from winning their just laurels. These would follow merit, industry, etc.

The symposium would do better *after* the formation of the academy, but that will take time. Therefore it must precede organization. However, no one should contribute to it whom we aren't sure of. Our ultimate purpose should be hinted at in an anonymous Preface, or a Preface signed by all the contributors.

Jones (a Yankee like Knickerbocker and Hibbard who take to

Southernism as a means to academic preferment)—Jones will not hurt us if we are quick. I have just signed a contract with Harpers for my third prose book (on a Southern subject) and it is more than probable that they will grab our symposium without delay. I plan now to return in September, or by Oct. 12th at the latest: I will see Saxton and Wells immediately. My contract with Harpers is mentioned in absolute confidence: I haven't yet disposed of Balch to my satisfaction. (*Davis* will be out Sept. 20th—a better book than Jackson.)

I enclose a slightly revised table of contents and contributors. It may give you some new hints. I also enclose a letter from Fletcher written after I had outlined my idea of an academy. He is with us—a powerful acquisition. (Can't find it. Will send it in a few days.)

There are other details, but I will wait till I hear from you . . .

Please let me hear from you immediately. I am getting really excited.—Yours ever, Allen

Contributors and Subjects

1. The Philosophy of Provincialism—Ransom.

2. The Southern Way of Life—*Perhaps* Stark Young, if he can be prevented from including anecdotes of his grandmother. I suggest Red Warren.

3. Contemporary Southern Literature—Davidson, because he knows and understands it better than any of us.

4. Humanism and the Southern Tradition. (This is the title I would give to your Numbers 4 and 5—the Philosophy of South. Hist. and the Historically Minded South.) I would like to do this.

5. Religion and Aristocracy in the South. (Your Number 6—"Protestantism in the South.") The problem here would be: Was Southern religion in accord with social and political tendencies? I can't suggest a writer for this, unless Warren does it, leaving No. 2 to Young.

6. Harper and Dew:[12] Philosophers of the Old South. (We must revive these men. I know a good deal about them, but we should get

[12] Thomas R. Dew and William Harper, two of the ablest of the proslavery writers. The Phillips referred to below is U. B. Phillips, author of *Life and Labor in the Old South.*

some one else to do them up.) This essay should lead off or at least come second.

7. Politics—The article should be as you describe it. But where is the writer? . . . Very important subject.

8. Economic Issues—The contributor here stumps me too. *We need a most efficient economist on our side.*

9. Education. John Gould Fletcher. He is just the man. He already knows the subject.

10. Literature in the Old South. Who could do this to our satisfaction? I think the subject must be discussed. Note: A man like Phillips, good as he is in his line, must be used only as a document: he is limited to facts, while we wish to rise upon facts to salvation. He is a fine example of the *dilution* we shall suffer without a definite program. The academy could use him; he would dissipate us otherwise.

The symposium should be heavily cross-referenced by footnote.

August 20/29

Dear Allen:—Just returned from a long motor trip through Pennsylvania, Virginia, East Tennessee, etc., and found your letter awaiting me. I hope, very much that my letter (with various enclosures) written from Yaddo and mailed to your Paris address, reached you. It contained information about the Southern project and explained (though inadequately) my long silence.

I hope very much that we can get into more immediate communication soon, for I am all excited over various things and long very much for an exchange of ideas with you. I agree that the New York influence is very dangerous. We must not be swallowed or exploited or corrupted. But how shall we avoid it? I tell you, it will take some clever fighting, some terrific blows intelligently delivered and backed by sound information as well as theory, to put over any program such as we are talking about. The forces against us are colossal, and we shall have to work with swift subtle strategy to overcome the lead they already have.

The topics I want to discuss with you, as soon as I get time and space, center around such items as these:

1. The Southern book—as a heading-up of ideas and as the basis of a program.

2. The reformation of my Book Page, especially with relation to the program under discussion.

3. The possible establishment of a magazine *or* the capture, as you suggest, of the Sewanee Review.

4. Ways of getting in touch with the young people, especially young literary groups at colleges, and heading them in the right direction.

5. Ways of interesting and influencing Southern Newspapers, by a studiously organized system of letters, clip-sheets, etc. (*Vide*: the established technique of propaganda—fight fire with fire.)

6. In general, to get down to the practical plane—to act as well as speculate and talk. There is no telling what a few determined souls may accomplish!

I'm very eager to see your Criterion essay, of which John has just told me. Will have a look at it this week, as soon as I see John. How is your work coming, and when are you coming back? . . .

Am very anvious to hear from you fully. Best regards, salutations, good luck.—Faithfully, Don

October 26, 1929

Dear Allen:—As I explained in a note just sent as forerunner, I have been under all the usual pressures for the past six weeks or more and have not been able to sit down and compose an intelligent letter to you. I sent the cable, with the other friends, to let you know you were by no means forgotten.

I had looked forward to seeing you this fall, for your letters had indicated a hope that you would be in the States in September or October, and that was another reason—until your later note came—why I did not write at once. I'm really disappointed, for selfish reasons, that the Guggenheim people decided you should stay abroad for another six months. Doubtless this is in the best interests of literature, etc., but it doesn't conduce to my happiness, for, things being what they are, I feel an extraordinary need for talking things over.

As to the projected symposium, I do not think it can really develop until you get back to the States, for I cannot swing it by myself, busy and distracted as I am now, and I sadly need advice, comfort, and the aid of a strong right arm. There is nobody around here who has either sufficient zeal or vision to pitch into the business wholeheartedly. Ransom, you know, never was a man to push anything. He will give moral support, he will write, he will be a strong man in conference, but he does not energize. Andrew Lytle is terrifically interested, but he has to get his Forrest out of the way before all else.[12] I simply cannot fit the project into my routine until things loosen up a bit, but I am ready to do all that I can do under the circumstances. I lead an incredible life, hardly ever relaxing from the round of hard driving work. In a month or two, however, I may be better organized. I have about reached the conclusion that I am going to have to neglect a lot of routine things, or do them superficially, or delegate them, in order to get down to the important things that must be done if I am ever to pull out of the hole I'm in.

All this is to say that I have gone no further with the symposium idea than when I wrote you this past summer. Events and further rumination indicate that it has been just as well to wait. The terrific industrial "crises" now occurring almost daily in North Carolina give present point to all the line of thinking and argument that we propose to do. I don't know whether you have read of these or not. It is enough to say that hell has pretty well broken loose, and the old story of labor fights is being repeated. It all means more ammunition for us.

Now let me make some remarks on the revised scheme of the symposium that you sent me. Three points are now definitely taken care of between you and Ransom and me: Ransom, the Philosophy of Provincialism; you, Humanism and the Southern Tradition; me, the Literature, especially the new. As for Stark Young, I think it would be extremely wise to have such a man as he is, if we can be sure he understands the full import of the affair and does not treat it simply as a literary or sentimental excursion. These points are in his favor: he knows the tone of Southern life at its best and writes extremely well; he comes

[12] *Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company* (1931).

from Mississippi originally, but has wandered widely enough not to be accused of narrow parochialism; we need at least one such eminent Southern writer, outside of our own circle, to strengthen our array, and he would put us in no danger, I think, of being swallowed up by New York. I happen to know also that he is very bitter against Howard Mumford Jones, who represents the "enlightened" N. Carolina school. I have been in correspondence with Young recently and intend to feel him out gradually and see just exactly how the land lies. With him, four of our topics will be taken care of.

As for Education, I am quite opposed to Fletcher (of course, I respect and admire him completely) no matter how great his knowledge of the subject. He is too far away from the scene. I don't see how he could help us. As I see this array, it must be composed of people who are *in the melee.*

I am not sure that we should try to discuss literature in the Old South at all, but am open to conviction. I know of no one who could handle this topic. Neither can I suggest anybody to discuss Religion and Aristocracy.

What we *must* find is an Economist and a Political thinker. . . . If we could find these two contributors, we could really enter the fray, for at a pinch Religion could be covered by either you or Ransom, and we would not absolutely be compelled to resurrect Harper and Dew.

We have either got to find the right men for the various subjects, or write the entire book ourselves. I don't know how to find the men except by a process of watchful waiting and slow inquiry. We run up against, here, the lack of knowledge of our own people that is a handicap to promoting anything in the South. I know all the people we ought *not* to ask, but I don't know who our friends are, for they are heretics and must keep quiet, or they are sentimentalists and have been squelched. What can be done but study the situation and chew the rag cautiously until we get the right line-up? I wish you would rack your brain for suggestions. I'm willing to take almost any line-up of topics if we can only get the right people.

One thing I intend to do at once. I am going to try to find that

Economist. The North Carolina situation is sure to bring him out, somewhere.

The rest of your scheme—what you propose as really overshadowing the symposium—I am ready to support for all I'm worth. I believe in practically everything you suggest. I would differ with you only on points of strategy. I believe also that the scheme, ambitious as it is, is not too large for realization, or at least not too impractical to work for and to bring into something like realization. A small group could do it, if they had the proper weapons,—that is, money, literary power, access to the public mind. One man couldn't do it unless he were Jesus Christ.

It isn't the sort of thing one rushes into overnight. We can take our time. To you goes the credit for defining sharply and ambitiously the loose aspirations that have been rattling around in our heads. It's a tremendous stimulus just to have your letter with its grand outline of activities, and though I've been a long time in answering, I want you to know that your letter shook me up from top to toe and filled me with a new fire. Ransom and I talked it over at great length, and Andrew Lytle was with us, too, I believe. You put us all in a stound, but not the kind of stound that lays people flat. Rather we were raised up—but all we seem to be able to do for the time being is talk.

I don't know how I'm going to talk about this sort of thing in letters. There is simply too much to say. I'll just repeat my hope that you won't be any later than is necessary in coming back, and when you come back, let's get together at once. Lytle has been urging Ransom and me to take a week-end off, with him, to discuss the whole project more fully.

All that I see that I can do for the present is to talk, sow seed, accumulate data.

One weakness in your program I should like to point out. The Southern people are not actually united on anything these days—except the Negro question, and they do not know each other as well as they used to. How are they going to be attracted to a Cause unless it is linked up to something very concrete and of an importance that overwhelms all else—it can't be a mere intellectual issue or pure sentiment. It must be

as important as Food, Money, Sex, before real work can be done. Too bad that the second Ku Klux Klan came along when it did. We shall have to be careful not to fall into that slough.

I want to know where the money for newspaper, weekly, quarterly, etc., is going to come from, too. That's something to think about.

Your *Jefferson Davis* is, as I told you, magnificent. You are sweeping to a real triumph with it. Owsley told me that he was simply amazed. He knew you had not the long meticulous reading that "trained" historians usually do; how then had you, almost by intuition, seized just the right things, seen through problems, struck just the right answer? I told him that was the effect of real critical intelligence plus poetic sense at work; you simply didn't have to be as dull as the regular historians in order to be as right as they—in fact, you could beat them any time, because you didn't have your nose in the molehills, yet didn't overlook the molehills, either. Owsley thought there was really no unfavorable criticism to make of the book. Only on certain points where you couldn't have had access to information (in some cases, things that only Owsley has worked out), did he disagree with you.

What I liked best about the book was its underlying meaning or drift, which might not easily be perceptible to readers who don't know what you are finally after. To be sure, you express yourself openly in such passages as those Owsley quoted; but that there's more yet, I think I can see. It fortifies the Southern position immensely to clear up certain old issues and also to throw overboard certain debris—you do that. The style of the J. D. is a great advance over Stonewall. It's written with great effectiveness. If Bowers's book[14] hadn't unfortunately preceded yours just a little, I should think you would have had a very wide sale, and you may yet. You are moving right on the crest of a wave of popular interest, and yet you are not merely exploiting that popular interest,—you are shewdly informing it and teaching it something worth learning.

I should have liked to review your book myself, but I thought it would mean more to you locally to have Owsley do it. . . .—Faithfully, Don

[14] Claude Bowers, *The Tragic Era.*

Post Scripta:

(1) Such books as Borsodi's *This Ugly Civilization* & Jas. Truslow Adams' *Our Business Civilization* indicate a drift of opinion that is very much in our favor. I'm reading these now, & commend them to you.

(2) We might seriously consider doing the "Symposium" between us—you, Ransom, possibly Red Warren & Lytle, possibly S. Young. Maybe you and Ransom & I could do it. There is nothing to keep us from plunging into economics & politics as we have already plunged into religion & history. If we, by ourselves, published such a book, we would then be able to find our real friends. They would surely make themselves known. And it is our great weakness now not to know *who* is on our side.

c/o Guaranty Trust Company, 4 Place de la Concorde,
Paris, Nov. 9, 1929

Dear Don:—Your note enclosing Owsley's review came in the same mail with your fine long letter of October 26th. They catch me at a bad time for correspondence: I have just got up from the flu. . . .

As to the symposium. I am stumped to find any contributors. . . . Why . . . won't Owsley write an essay in politics and economy? We should probably have to rewrite it to make it readable, but that makes small difference. He evidently knows a lot about it: I suppose it all depends on his conception of his job as a historian. I didn't mean to vote against Stark Young. I was only not certain that you were aware of a sentimental leaning in his writing. As soon as I get to New York I will talk to him. He is sensitive, but the problem is to make him see that a certain amount of abstraction is necessary to connect up his feelings with a large program of ideas. He is an intelligent and highly cultivated fellow, and we musn't lose him.

I heard from Lyle Lanier the other day. Do you ever talk to him? He said some things that indicated that he is moving in our direction and though I don't know what he could be used for, he might do something. Strangely enough, he said precisely the same things about the University as you say. That it is going to hell.

I have the man to write on religion. He is a Rhodes Scholar from Texas—Dixon Wecter, a very good friend to both Red and me. He is about the most learned man I ever saw—though he is only 24—and he understands and shares our views on all points. I recommend him without reservation. He is one friend discovered among divers enemies.

We are perfectly at liberty to plunge into politics, religion, literature, history. Departmental learning is by no means a product of the scholars; it is part of a larger movement towards the repudiation of responsibility. Scholars are no longer compelled to think about anything; they merely keep scholarship going without knowing why; so the politician with the state. If we are mere researchers, say, in literature, we don't care what the researcher in history does. But the same values are involved in all kinds of intellectual work, and part of our job is to show the relations of value.

There is one feature of our movement that calls for comment. We are not in the least divided, but we exhibit two sorts of minds. You and Andrew seem to constitute one sort—the belief in the eventual success, in the practical sense, of the movement. The other mind is that of Ransom and Warren and myself. I gather that Ransom agrees with me that the issue on the plane of action is uncertain. At least I am wholly sceptical on that point; but the scepticism is one of hoping to be convinced, not by standing aside to watch the spectacle, but by exerting myself. In other words, I believe that there is enough value to satisfy me in the affirmation, in all its consequences, including action, of value. If other goods proceed from that, all the better. My position is that since I see the value, I am morally obligated to affirm it. That sounds pretty grand, but I can think of no other phrase. . . .

Your column about Bowers, Schlesinger, and the others is very good indeed. Keep it up.

I must close now. This is a scattered letter because my wits are still a little scattered from the flu. I will do better next time. I hope you can come up to New York in the next six months. It isn't likely that I shall be able to come down there for some time: it is a matter of money. Balch is making a failure out of a book that should sell very well. My biography business has to date left me with a deficit of

about $400.00. I mean I've made less than I spent in writing the books. I'm just where I was before. So it goes.

Best regards and wishes to you all. Write very soon.—Allen

Paris, December 11, 1929

Dear Don:—Yours of Nov. 26th this moment arrived. I can't answer it in full, as I am finishing up several articles and reviews: we are sailing on the George Washington, Dec. 28th, and unless the boat sinks, as seems likely from the recent storms, we will land on Jan. 5th.

As to details you bring up:

Dixon Wecter is a Catholic, but also a philosopher, with a philosophic view of religion very much resembling our view. In fact, I have discussed the whole issue with him, and feel sure he is on the right track. In the end of course, we don't have to print his essay if we don't like it: it must not contain a special plea. This is your point and mine.

Ransom's man Nixon sounds good—a student of agrarianism. Or is it Dozier[15] who is Ransom's man? I don't know anything about these people. As to Stringfellow Barr,[16] he is just our man; I can't imagine why I didn't think of him. He is, in the first place, a historian, and in the second an extremely good writer; and in the third he is absolutely on our side. I have seen a good many essays and reviews by him recently, and they all bear this out. Why not get him to write on the educational matter, not merely reminiscently, but to propose some *practical* end from our general point of view.

The other day I received a long letter from Lyle Lanier about our discussion. He is with us to the limit. (Observe how a little activity brings out support) Now, he is one of our most valuable men: he is a technically trained scientist who intends to acquire more scientific technique, largely to philosophical ends—i.e., in order to criticize the abuses of science. He made a most interesting point: he argues that industrial

[15] Howard Douglas Dozier, professor of economics at Dartmouth College and author of *A History of the Atlantic Coastline Railroad* (1920).

[16] Although Stringfellow Barr was thought of as a contributor to the symposium, he and Howard Mumford Jones became outspoken opponents of its principles. Barr debated Ransom in Richmond on a program conducted by Sherwood Anderson and attended by 3500 persons.

society, being a product of the mind running on one of its functions, is a close parallel to "dissociation" in the individual. His remedy of course is ours—to restore the latent and suppressed values of the South. We *must* get him to contribute an essay to the Symposium along that line. The effect of a scientist pointing out the abuses of applied science would have a much greater tactical effect than what we say from the outside. Besides, Lyle has an extremely efficient and canny intelligence; he will know where to argue his points. I don't know anything about Mitchell and Anderson.[17] I am suspicious of Johnson—not of his character but of his head, which is not of the best quality. He writes adequately enough.

People like Owsley, who may not enter the immediate arena, have an immense value; we need more of them. . . . —Best regards from us all, Allen

Paris, Dec. 12, 1929

Dear Don:—When I wrote to you yesterday, I hadn't had time to read the issue of your Page that you so thoughtfully sent me.

Your discussion of the Southern issue around such people as Young and myself as against [T.S.] Stribling is very good indeed. It is more than merely good, it is downright daring. The few issues of the Page that I have seen in the last year or so have all contained very pertinent discussions of the two general divisions of Southern writers. There is certainly place for a revaluation by you of our leading novelists, particularly those who have great reputations in New York—Ellen Glasgow, for example. I am of the opinion that she writes an abominable prose style, and that she is one of the worst novelists in the world; it is about time that we repudiated people like her and Cabell. These two writers are fine examples of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. Miss Glasgow has everything that I have learned to detest in the transformation of the Virginian character—the feeble and offensive assumption of past superiority along with casting a vote for Hoover: she ex-

[17] Broadus Mitchell, political economist on the faculty of Johns Hopkins, author of the *Rise of the Cotton Mills in the South* (1921). At this time Sherwood Anderson was the editor of two Marion, Virginia, newspapers.

hibits the "aristocratic" manners of the South and shows how ridiculous they are: she is an incredible old snob who would not receive in her house a "man of the people" (as she would put it) and yet she wrote a novel proving the sterling worth of a man born in a circus tent, the whole atmosphere of the novel being that of sniffing and calculating condescension. The people like Miss Glasgow and Cabell convince outsiders that all Southerners are snobs and pretenders, wherefore their books sell by the hundred thousand. Our job is to point out that Mr. Cabell and Miss Glasgow simply happen to be two snobs who took to writing—there being in any society a few snobs if you look hard enough. The Isabel Patersons[18] get their version of the South from Cabell and Glasgow; so when Stark Young gives a different version, i.e., one in which the characters are not snobs, he is made out to be one himself. I am enclosing a carbon of a long review and a somewhat general discussion at the same time, of Cabell's new novel;[19] the review will come out in the N. R., but I wanted to be sure you saw it, as it falls right into line with your discussions. This much can be said for the N. R. They are bewildered, but thoroughly honest and without a special plea on the issues that concern us. It is my hope (confidentially) to capture the New Republic to a certain extent for our views. Young's position on the staff is a great help in that direction.

An incidental point in your discussion brings up an issue that I'd like to get your views of. There is a particular way in which we can overstate our case and do it harm where we might as well do it good. Take Hemingway, for example. You speak of his writing as "scientific ministration." Please, for my sake and for the sake of English prose, look at Hemingway again. I hereby accuse you of taking a thesis to Hemingway and coming away with it proved. There is nothing scientific about Hemingway. And if you think he is a realist, then realism must be redefined. He is unquestionably one of the great stylists of English prose, and it is not his fault if a horde of damn fools have taken him up: in reading Hemingway it is hard to get rid of the nonsense that has been written about him, and see his work in itself. All of which leads to this:

[18] Writer of the column *Turns with a Bookworm* in the New York *Herald-Tribune*.
[19] *The Way of Ecben* reviewed in *New Republic* (January 8, 1930).

we must not get so lost in our vision of what novelists should do to the Southern scene that we reject the version of "reality" given us by writers who are not Southern. In short, to do that is to commit provincialism at its least attractive level. In short, again, we cannot afford to commit the converse of the Stribling fallacy: when we look at literature we have got first to decide that it is literature, or that it is not, and make our thesis secondary. We cannot afford to admire only those writers who explicitly support our thesis. Now, as a matter of fact, if you look closely enough, Hemingway really supports it: in other words he is a Yankee writer whom we would do well to capture. You must remember that Hemingway's characters come to him through observation, and that his sole scene of observation for ten years has been, due to certain accidents, which he did not choose, the European milieu of mixed Europeans and Americans. Whether or not you like the kind of people he has had to observe, the very fact that he sticks to concrete experience, to a sense of the *pure present*, is of immense significance for us. Hemingway, in fact, has that sense of a stable world, of a total sufficiency of character, which we miss in modern life. He is one of the most irreconcilable reactionaries I have ever met; he hates everything that we hate, although of course he has no historical scene to fall back on; and, amusingly enough, he told me recently that when the South lost the Civil War it was a great calamity for all men, for it made the ordinary pleasures of life cost money! The man has an astonishing, if untutored, insight into all these things. Now the point I am after is this: if Hemingway were a Southerner he would be just the novelist we are looking for—he would present us without any thesis at all. In other words, the ideal Southern novelist is the ideal novelist anywhere—I don't mean that Hemingway is the ideal novelist, only that he is nigh perfect in his own job—and ultimately there is no difference, for literature, between one thesis and another, in the sociological sense. That is the trouble with Cabell and Glasgow—a sociological thesis underlies their work. Our true Southern novelist at present is Elizabeth Roberts, who does not write as a Southerner or as anything else. I agree, therefore, with your position as I see it, only in so far as our thesis is as good for literature as that of the opposition. I agree with it wholly in so far as it is

better for society, for the kind of society that we want. I don't think we can afford to give the opposition the slightest chance to say that we aren't as disinterested as to literature as any critics can possibly be. Shouldn't we keep the two things distinct? Otherwise logic brings us back to Thomas Nelson Page.

I've had this on my chest for some time: it seems to me that we should watch out for this point in the Symposium, for if we don't the enemy will beat us over the heads with it in his counter attack.

Caetera desunt. More later. Hail without farewell.—Allen

Isn't the point about Cabell and Glasgow this: that *because* they have a mixed thesis—i.e., mixed of old Southism and Progress—*because* their intelligences are split into contradictory values, they are bad novelists. This would be *literary* criticism using the social material to explain the literary deficiency. That is to say, we must attack them first as artists, and then show that their social attitude, because it is muddled, distracts the creative mind into mere propaganda and ruins the work of art. This could almost be made into a principle—that all great, or really good writers, must have a simple homogeneous sense of values, which incidentally are the kind of values we wish to restore.

Dec. 29, 1929

Dear Allen:—This will be an All Hail and Welcome letter to greet you on arrival, and to answer in all haste your two letters that have just reached me—the one announcing your imminent return, the other about Glasgow, Cabell, etc.

You could hardly imagine how overjoyed I am that you are back. Good God, what a relief it will be to have you near at hand again and not to have to write across the water, with time all against one as well as space. Furthermore, the pot is a-bilin'. You are arriving just at the crucial moment and can do the pushing and shaping that has gone a little slowly and lamely with you in France. I see my metaphors have got mixed, but lay that to enthusiasm.

Ransom, Lytle, and I have been having a series of earnest conferences in the past two weeks, and we have decided to push things to a rapid conclusion, if you will help us as I know you will. It seems,

with matters as they now stand, that we should be able to have the articles all written and ready by early spring—say April at the latest—and, if we then submit the book to a publisher and place it, we ought to get it out by next fall. The time is ripe. We musn't wait too long, even if the book doesn't have the full-rounded perfection we should desire.

The lay-out is about as it was, with the addition of Nixon. I enclose two letters from him (please return them) that indicate, surely, that he is our man—even if he may need a little coaching. He has not yet been definitely solicited. I am to describe the project to him this week, when he returns from the historical convention at Durham; and I shall sound him out thoroughly before a final committance; it need not be final, anyhow, as, in the case of your man Wecter, we don't need to take his article if it isn't what we want. I shall also write Stringfellow Barr a "feeler" this week. He might possibly have been solicited for H. M. Jones's book; but that should make no difference. We still need to find a man for politics, though I don't consider that an absolute essential, as politics is involved, and can be implied or explicitly defined, in our various articles.

I think you should see Stark Young as soon as possible. I am not sure, though I have corresponded with him considerably, that he thoroughly understands what we are up to. Can you take the job of explaining matters to him more fully than I have, in my hurry, as yet been able to do?

To the end of clarifying "objectives" (great word!) Ransom, Lytle, and I are working on a sort of Credo or Manifesto, which will serve to acquaint contributors with our aims and to furnish a definite line for articles to follow. We'll send this to you as soon as it is ready in its tentative form, and you, no doubt, will either want to compose one of your own for comparative study or to make amendments and suggestions in extenso, or both. This Credo, in its final form, can be used as a foreword to the volume; and I have suggested that we also have a final summary, at the end of the book, in which the various articles are reviewed and applied to the general purpose—this will be a wonderful help to future reviewers, of course!

The discussions with Ransom and Lytle have given the book (in our minds, at least) a slightly different turn, but I think that it will harmonize, rather than otherwise, with what you have probably been thinking. What you say about Hemingway and our critical attitude towards literature, leads me to guess that you may have had some of the same thoughts that we have had.

Our movement (if it can be called that) more and more takes a broad range. In recent talks we have got the idea that perhaps we ought not to limit our consideration to the South, as sectionalists endeavoring to reconstruct our home section and therefore addressing ourselves mainly to the South. Perhaps we ought to leave the gate open for an appeal to any of the parts of the country that may be suffering from the invasion of the metropolitan, industrial, business mind and that may be restive under the yoke of progress. Perhaps our program develops into a program of provincialism in general, not only Southern provincialism, and with it all the values (to be defined and announced) that belong to a country life, decentralized, stable, local, self-sufficient, etc., as opposed to the other thing now rampant but already attacked from various quarters. In that view, the South would be the most obvious historical and contemporary example available, and the most exciting example; but we would thus be able to make it clear that we are not proposing simply a romantic recession, but a straightforward set of doctrines for the day, opening a fertile field of general interest anywhere, but especially to Southerners, our immediate concern. It would amount to this: that we would go beyond the scientific meliorists (the New Repub. thinkers belong to this group, don't they?), beyond the humanists, who after all are vague, and entirely away from the Mencken-Lewis trend (I should say theirs is a criticism of manners only), and diametrically opposite to the socialistic radicals (who have a megalopolitan proposition to urge), and we should offer a doctrine full of rich particularity and immense appeal. Turn this over in your mind. It will come up in clearer form in the Credo.

I see from your letters that you didn't receive my hasty scribble about Howard Mumford Jones's solicitation of me for his symposium, now definitely under way. I enclose the letter I wrote him, and again

ask for your advice. The main question to settle is: will I do the cause good by appearing in two places, or not? And second, can I write two pieces on Southern literature, both different? I think I can do two different things, especially as Jones wants a "report" rather than a program. But I want to do nothing to injure our own case in any way. Hurry up your reply on this as much as you can, for I must give Jones a final answer. His lay-out of contributors, as given to me, now includes Broadus Mitchell on Industry, Knight on education, Lathan on politics, W. W. Alexander on the white view of the negro, Moton of Tuskegee on the negro view of the negro, Archer Bass on religion. About as I suspected; it will be mainly a progressive line-up.

Returning to your letter,—behind my phrase "scientific ministration," as applied to Hemingway, lies the story of a review I wrote of his book,[20] which I will send you if I can find it. In this I discussed his book very harshly, I fear, as a misguided application of science (in this case, it seemed to be behavioristic psychology) to literature. Perhaps I was wrong, and if so, I'll be glad to be proved in error, for I never really made up my mind about his book. I said to myself that I might just as easily have written a thoroughly favorable review, following another line of discussion. And I must confess that I extended myself at Hemingway's expense partly for a local purpose. I am simply compelled to do something strenuous in order to get the public ear. I can't go along mildly in a sweet Harry Hansen[21] manner. And one of the best ways to get people to listen is to devote all possible power to a surprising angle (not otherwhere discussed) of the work of an author much in the public eye. I am afraid that I sacrificed Hemingway (to some extent) in order to make a point against science. But I should add that I did this the more readily because I felt that he was exposed to criticism, at least to debate, on this particular point. I certainly respect him, and I'm glad to have your opinion of him to take to heart. And with what you say about literary judgments in general, as not to be made from a sectional basis, but on the higher level, I'm in perfect agreement. I've

[20] See Donald Davidson, *The Spyglass*, ed. J. T. Fain (Nashville, 1963), pp. 88-92.

[21] Former literary editor of the Chicago *Daily News*; at this time Hansen was writing "The First Reader" column in the New York *World*.

felt for quite a while that I was in danger of losing balance and becoming merely a cantankerous localist, and your admonishment warms my conscience to its task.

I won't have time to discuss your Cabell review at length. It is one of the best reviews you've written. You say what I think, exactly, though I wouldn't have hit on the very precise and applicable terms you have used. But why has nobody seen this? Simply because Cabell has not been approached with the point of view that throws him in a proper light—five years ago your point of view would have been simply literary, wouldn't it? What a difference it makes to see him in a total perspective. Here, I should say, sectionalism has been decidedly to your advantage. Edmund Wilson, for example, could never have made such an approach. I think it very important that Cabell should be handled just as you have handled him. You've given me much food for thought,—of which more later. This helps me in a book I'm thinking of—informal probably—essays on Southern writers of the last ten years.

I hope when this reaches you, it will find a happy traveler completing a happy voyage. Now you know more or less how I felt when I came back, under different conditions, in 1919! Write me as soon as possible. Your letters have made great good cheer! And in the very near future, somehow, somewhere, we must get together. Nothing will fix things up like several good talks—and besides there are the old reasons of friendship more important than all. *Regards to your wife and daughter.*—Faithfully, Don

Clarksville, Tenn., September 3, 1930

Dear Don:—Don't faint! Just read the enclosed letter. Red and I are holding the original until we hear from you, John, and Lyle.

What we want to get you all to do is to take a vote. Andrew votes with us, making three in favor of sending the letter to Saxton. If you three vote nay, it is a tie, and I don't know what to suggest, unless Owsley is around to make a seventh vote.

The point is, that we need a categorical answer by return mail. You will see that I am doubtful if there is enough time; but we can leave that to Saxton.

On the way up here, we were suddenly seized by the horror of I'll Take My Stand,[22] and rushed to the typewriter. Like most horrors we don't think about it all the time; it just comes over us occasionally!

We had a fine time—come up here as soon as you can.—Yrs. ever, Allen

September 5, 1929

Dear Allen:—I would like for you to consider this letter as private and personal. But the enclosed signed statement, which is the expression of Ransom's and my views on the question you raise, is of course for any of the group who may be concerned. We could not locate either Lanier or Owsley, by the way.

You urged me—I take it, quite humorously and a little teasingly—not to faint on reading the proposed letter to Saxton.[23] You must surely have anticipated, then, the astonishment that I naturally felt. I was quite taken aback; and so was Ransom.

I must beseech you, good friend Allen, for God's sake to stick your head under the pump; or take calomel and castor oil and go bed to ponder on your immortal soul; or do something else to revive your practical sense, which seems to be getting clogged up with foreign vapors.

It is just about six weeks until the book is scheduled to appear, and there is some excitement already in the air. George Fort Milton, in the Chattanooga News, just wrote an editorial on our book—a leader, a column and a half long; and you may be sure this editorial, with T. H. Alexander's widely distributed comment, will be extensively noted. Yet at this moment, you three stalwarts suddenly get the horrors and again propose drastic measures about the title.

This is like stopping to polish your shoes in the midst of a headlong charge, just before you reach the enemy's breastworks; or like pausing to argue about the wording of the motto on the flag—"Are we right sure, Soldiers and Comrades, that it should be 'Sic semper tyran-

[22] Tate, Lytle, and Warren protested against the title *I'll Take My Stand* and preferred to call the symposium "Tracts Against Communism."

[23] Eugene F. Saxton, an editor at Harper's. The letter to Saxton is apparently lost.

nis?' Would not 'Lux et veritas' better describe our dignified array?"

I do not understand how you can help seeing that fastidiousness is nothing short of fatal, at such a time.

We had discussed this whole matter before, and I had gained the impression that you were reconciled, or if not reconciled, you at least were conscious of the difficulties of opening a matter which was at the very least a debatable one.

Another point. You and John and I signed the contract for this book. We are the responsible parties. John and I feel that you are taking our responsibilities a little lightly. We are unwilling to see the matter go to a vote, because it is not the title that is being decided but, in substance, the question of whether or not the book will appear at the time scheduled—which happens to be a singularly propitious time. You spoke of having the horrors. Well, after sweating over this book for the past six months, I am exposed to nothing short of delirium tremens when faced with the prospect of a democratic majority coolly voting, at the last moment, to argue with the publisher about a change of title—as if that were quite easily done. Good lord, have ye no bowels? And Red and Andy, with those ballots of theirs so gaily cast,—are they whetting their beaks on the old man's gizzard, clack-clack? Do they propose to sign that letter? Or are you going to do it yourself?—Faithfully, Don

Clarksville, Sunday, Sept. 7, 1930

Dear Don:—You will get this with our Official Reply, but it is written twenty-four hours later, and the smoke of battle has cleared away.

I was very much astonished at the high seriousness of your reply. We didn't take the matter half so seriously, and we were amazed that you all should enlist the cosmos behind you, making the proposed letter to the publisher an affair of good and evil, honor and dishonor. It was, of course, nothing of the sort, and I am afraid, my dear Don, that in your anxiety you all put the issue in a category where it didn't belong, and punched us most grievously below the belt.

I say we didn't take it seriously, but of course we did—only in

another way. Your Official Letter brought up a very good point—that as historians we know that movements have failed because their groups couldn't work together. It is obvious, of course, that we haven't worked together, and it is also obvious that my protests, and Red's too, have been efforts to work together. For the title was never submitted to a formal vote, and the two attempts that I have made to get the group to work together on the title have been blocked.

It seems that you and John have been the defenders of the title, Red and I the opponents. Your position was not backed by a formal decision of the group, or by a quorum of the group, and in the face of this, since we stood two against two, we felt that it was our privilege to test your position in the hope that we might vindicate our own. In either case, we should have been eager to stand by the results of the vote. . . .

There is no personal issue involved here whatever. It is simply a situation arising from the practical exigencies of action, and it has nothing at all to do with the friendly relations of the group. To assume that we can't face an issue of this kind on the ground of personal friendship is a perfectly suicidal position. I hold no such position.

It is over now. Your title triumphs. And I observe that Alexander today on the basis of the title defines our aims as an "agrarian revival," and reduces our real aims to nonsense. These are, of course, an agrarian revival in the full sense, but by not making our appeal through the title to ideas, we are at the mercy of all the Alexanders—for they need only to draw portraits of us plowing or cleaning a spring to make hash of us before we get a hearing.

My melancholy is profound.—Yours ever, Allen

besmilr brigham

Hearn at Grand Anse

i

sleeping,
sleeping with flower of language
the candle, through glass
burning
blown out by the dry warm sea
wind, outside
coming in with him
a sheaf of white-burst waves washing
on the black sand

ii

opening his gate
made of bamboo
little green cane breakings
wash in, cover the curled beach
shining with a near-silver steel
ore
all bright
heavy in the damp,
settling from the long-ago erupted
volcano

iii (the lambi)

he hears the great conchs blow
spiral shells
of sound, glistening
snails of the sea; its red-earth belly
crawling
over sand, feeler horns, how closely

the man looks at the eyes
'the golden iris' he says, as one
glows pulling
to get its fierce scroll, sea shell back
into the water, the fluted
edges fill—
dry
with the animal dead
    their heaved sounds float, surge up
on air-echoes
        from the compact waves; breakers
hard against the wind

the call is mellow and deep-singing, goes
to the heart
of him who heard it, on land—sounding
far back, over the hills

The Face of Baudelaire

i

that looks out of the mirror
the heavy eyes
isn't once enough to live the terror of this
earth. i search for
the man in his works, dim record, the
lighted recording:
economy, distress

because honor is a rare thing with a man
to live by the word.
a lone bird, queer hawk, his feet caught in the wires
looks out of the distance at me
not with the sainthood of Rilke, or the hard-
wrought line of Hardy, the song
idiot singer of Yeats (in his house of reeds)
a reptile awareness;
from the garden of evil he looks through the
distances of suffering

harsh and from
those still days, finding god and not finding
god. façade of the cathedral

ii

writing in his time
he plunged his pen with paint brushes. the painters
contrary to mind, a dance, macabre
love offering. Meissonier's Barricade
(death and piled rock in the old long street tunnel, house-
fronts) reality, a realism of
bodies; the stiff exuberant morality. Delacroix
from an age involved—
that we build rounds on now. they are
legends: grave diggers and Romeo, the high sultan of
Morocco with his bodyguard. women
Sybil and the golden bough a transparency from
    Goya, the new ascent in dark shape

making with pen the hard sculpture
that no body of woman or man could draw

his deliberate senses form. the old and
innocent, who understood
the acquired duty of pain and reason

The Gate of Fire

april, 1970

i

from innocence, the angel stands

between us
his shape of terror, exchange
as we stand before one another
shut with a gate of fire

our arrogance
the illusion, that each can touch
the breath is air the breath
touches air
words
move as the angel's wings
folding over the flames, the words

open the fire
the hands
touch near, reach to place the body to
feel out for—;
the voice
we move in echoes, the echoing room
shuts over us
tight as the tree in the garden

then like the tree opening, the leaves
spread
we live in a green circumference

ii

you are lovely as a flower
full of seed
you are beautiful as the rain
your hair
falls in the sunlight

your body is full and straight as the angel
your body carrying seed

the face
i see in your face the evidence
        that burns
i see in your body as it moves to me, i feel
the recurrent stillness
objective

oh how can we leave love, the changed form
she has just been with us
she departs
her long hair falling in shadows
over our minds. i found
after, a ribbon (under the couch, i found it
in darkness)

that fell from her hair

To the Unwritten Poems of Young Joy

i

that were.
that were not abstract as language is abstract
that did not demand description

from an animal age

the cry of the young wolf
the joy
of the wolf

a cat-joy sharpening its claws

not aware of sound, the joy of great waves
hitting the beach in storm
and the joy of unity

#

i try to bring a unity to myself
to all the figures i am

relationships

the human bonds that have broken the crystal
the learning that has torn
like the wind in heavy
leaves, shattering their substance
emotion that is not pure

i would lie as a red leaf lies
fallen on the ground

#

the joy of the rock
that is past the joy of the shaping of the
rock

ii

joy is born in the heart
it is born in the seed, and past joy

there is observance

the cry of the old wolf
is a cry of knowledge

yet, in winter, how the old ones' cries at the breaks
of our pasture
can pierce the heart—

the old wolves coming deep from their safe lairs
to hunt, to kill, to ravage the herds of
sheep, cows in huddle, cows
their bellies full of the young
blood on the ground when the calves come, the wolves
crying
to get in to them

they smell the blood on the ground
the animal cries
are cries of terror

the written and unwritten poems past the point of
wonder
are poems of love
and poems of terror

that are
the structure of language

The Child

i

Child in a Windmill Tower

a waving field

of sorghum, shining
seed heads
out of grass leaves, the leaves
settle, a
savannah of grass

fallen
in the wide irrigation canal
strips of dull leaf-sheets
float
        woven foils, their tilted
ends
papery boats like
fast egyptian barges

the ground lifts cool as a
clean ship sailing, under

the white cloud's edge
under the turbulent air wheel
dashing,
the body
from thin pipe of the reservoir
swung open

waiting
to rise high a swift bird, singly
or drop down—
calm as a broken leaf whirled deep in
the tumbling water

ii

Child in the Pear Tree

a hand
holds yellow
holding a yellow pear
the hand
balanced in light

reflects the light

in a shatter of
crystal leaves, flaking
crisp as long hair—through
the leaves
the clear light
moves soft as hair

the legs
arms
come up from the body of
the tree
they are
solid and pungent with yellow
limbs of

the glistening tree

iii

Child in the Water

movement in
waves of still light

a transparent solid
heavy
a made form's weight, shifts and settles
the softer water

the stomach
floats up heavier than liquid
a fish
shimmers

faster than any light, sound

the water dulls from a quickness of
sound

a voice
crashes under
and is hidden, lies flat
at the bottom where the ground is

the hands
turbulent as skin-held living fish
move out, great fins
weightless
carrying the water, being carried

wild in the current

iv

Child in a Big Pine

higher than
the orange-roof house
thick in the blue-yellow sky
rim

the brief spines
of the pine tree

pierce their fierce green
daggers
close to the heart
close on each distended, breakable
cone

the old pine stands, flung
a straight pole brisk sails so
high
the limbs hide
the white horse in its shade

its triangular shape
moves against
the hot red cone of the rectangular
chimney
shifts in burning smoke

further than
a kite can go
the thinnest hard branch
untouchable
lies, its flag

a bird balanced fragile in a sudden
wind

The Figures' Math

eight, and four

from Nursery Rhymes

eight a beautiful year—
knowledge sits a fat bird
with its belly its head
round with knowing

and four a time of wonder
not as many fingers as a hand
but square as a box—and inside
the box's wonder

twelve
(one and two
a mad fox running in the wood
and two hind racing after)

together to make a greater count:

when the heavy bird
droops his eyes wings shut, sits
a dry stick on a dry limb crying

in a still room, without
madness or fox or tender hind
where figures walk their stark shadows
the dead,

move over the mind

RONALD MORAN

Rising toward Birch

On this morning of light I leave bodies
still with sleep in the heat of the house.
On this morning of darkness ascending
I rise toward dark birch at the height

of my land. Drawing
my sharp-honed knife,
I peel straps of bark
and place my tongue
on cool sweet birch.

Yearly this morning
I return with birch
on my breath, berry
stained on my lips,
blood under my nails.

Incident in a Condemned Building

I do my work in a basement,
across the hall from a door
that is closed and locked.
Once passing as he left,

I saw rows of dead foxes
laid out on the floor.
I wanted to ask him why,
and how he came by so many?

For the pelts, for the sour
flesh, for his small son's
immense joy? We spoke
no language in common,

and I disliked working
across from his pleasures.
Facing the door to his flat
down the hall to the left,

there is a twelve-pointed
stag mounted. Touching
I felt wood, a sort of veneer.

Divorcée

It is to begin:
you need a ship and port,
a distance slowly come to.
For differences are real,

and the getting there
is good. On board no one
is really there, and you
are clearly enroute.

But on those mornings
of the days to come, in
the brushing of hair, the
choosing of suit or dress,

prepare, prepare.

Taking Out the Nails

Today I am pulling
nails out of pine,
which is best for
kindling, but they

must come out, or
the fire will whine
and smoke will rise in
thin shafts; it needs

flames rising and
embers in the grate,
so I spend the day
pulling nails with

a hammer. We are
unlike, God knows,
but I am thirty-two
years old, and the

year already is
springing beneath
the logs I have
piled against winter.

After a Question

I

The first squirrel a dog ever caught
he shook,
breaking the neck.

By the breadth of such limbs,
thick trees are distanced
and the necessary fact inbred.

Beneath, on lichen and moss,
small bodies lie.
Only the hunt and kill matter.

II

Exhausted by the young
who are always right
and tired by the old
who forever pronounce,
I am not in the middle;
I reject the borders
you erect and the guards
posted at every crossing.

Countries for John

In ordinary cats on well-groomed lawns,
John saw leopards on the scent of flesh.
In West Berlin men wore dark intrigues
like suits, but John stalked lions there.

Once back from Hong Kong, John closed in,
staring ceilings down upon himself.
Thinking he wore the Orient in peace,
we left this gentle man alone to hear

sounds the head must not accumulate.
Then in Milwaukee the leopard leaped,
and John became the cat for whom light
burned: pitch torch, the hunter's gun.

Moving Out

I will leave the frame
intact, the plaster

thick but cracked, the
fixtures laced with

bones of fly and moth,
but I will take from
the cubic air the sounds
we own. Let kudzu take

the brick, paint blanch,
and the floors swell.
Wherever we are on that
night when I must wake,

let me hear
the sounds the house
lets go, our lives
coming to in the dark.

D. C. BERRY

Michaelangelo

Early Spring and the mule
suspects more in the wind
than just the early gnats feeding
on his broken-hinged ears.

"Michaelangelo,"
I whisper,
"Michaelangelo . . . ."

Syllables mixing
with the skeem of new weeds
as he chews slow-juggling
the sun on his tongue.

"Michaelangelo,"
I whisper—

Ears stiffen flick and slap
as he prick-angles his nose
into a wind bearing April.

Ah mule . . . I know you

feel that love bolus
your sire left;

quid and suck it to a wad
as you did last Spring,
for you'll never rut
with what the drought
of March hath perced
to the root!

"Michaelangelo,"
I urge, "swallow it
or let it slobber lace
off your full monk lips."

Drinking with a Dead Bear

I sit up all night with a dead bear,
one the Rangers killed yesterday for
dragging off a sleeping bag
with a boy in it.

I drink a shot of mash
and then drink one
for the bear, back and forth.

Going to the cabinet for another
bottle I catch for my collar bone
swinging like a trapeze bar
in slow motion

and recall the time Bear and I
used to dance in the circus
as cute as we could for sugar cubes,
    toting our bag of tricks
back to the cage
when the spotlight was done with us,

giggling there in the dark
at how we had turned that audience
inside-out with envy.

You know Bear, I always thought you were
a bit better than I was, the way
you could priss off your left heel
and bobble your head like a puppet.

Did you do it for the Ranger?
    Dropping the bag of tricks?
Or did you stand on your head
    springing back to your legs
in a half flip, paw on your hip,
reaching for a cube with the other:

but getting a sting in your chest
the way Cicero Lucachelli did
when he missed for the first time
the flying trapeze bar

catching it out of the corner
of his eye as you did the canvas moon
gliding by spinning
to your buttocks and then hulking
into the net of pine needles already
turning red from the bottle of ketchup
leaking out of you . . . .

THERESA KATHLEEN ANDRÉ

On City Park Pool

Sullen ghosts float in the desert of this pool
where strange weeds rise from the baby shallows,
where the waters suck at the drains breeding scum,
or lap at the fingers of thickening reeds.

There's a barbed wire fence here, twice as tall
as the small boys who press their noses against it.
And no dirty feet slap puddles at the pavement.
Nobody ducks you or splashes your clothes.

All this concrete, the roofs, trees, the pipes
live in a dead park where grownups play golf.
The thin city children stick thirsty feet
in the wells of broken ghetto hydrants.

The rich kids stare at backyard pools.
The middle children, dreaming at the sky,
shoot lye to their brains,
to the lakes of their hearts.

The dry children finally sleep in a stone basin.
Their black skins disintegrate to lime dust, to lilies.

Their white skins turn slowly to coal dust and berries.
Their hard bones crumble to gray.

Street Poems

I. The Little Wicked Boy

The small black boy,
naked as a sassy goose,
stretched his body-skin
like a drum-head,
jutting his teeth
like the winking cat.

In the blue haze
obscuring the dull city,
he sprayed the sidewalk
with warm daring,
breaking the hissing
fire gusher.

And the two waters joined,
flowed down Main Street,
wetting careful people's shoes,
shocking ladies.

II. Sally

The weaving tail of the cat,
venom of the spread paw,
shoot awe to the anguished blood
of the veins of the throbbing rat.

Grinning behind his teeth,
the murderous tiger baby
laughs at the stunned lizard,
and rakes his white underneath.

(disquiet)

I have lived in a world of small affairs;
the way cockleburrs pitch off seeds,
the insides of coats I have examined closely.
The politics of the bedroom were my concerns.

I sifted my flour well, sugared my tea.
The world's poor ate when my cat licked his bowl.
I have gathered the stull of all resources
in twenty years; my savings are full.

And now you tell me I have fallen short,
that my earth business is upsidedown.
I will choke on the first piece of cake that I eat
and drown in my next glass of milk.

REYNOLDS PRICE

To my niece: our photograph, in a hammock

No one thinks you are mine.
I could have bought you from gypsies
Or—desperate (if solitude had left me desperate)—
From a defrocked doctor who bootlegs at night,
With abortions and morphine, a sideline of babies:
A derelict blond blue-eyed bastard
In my Black-Welsh arms.

They're wrong: you are.
At eighteen months (a day, a moment),
You are my remains—my physical remains;
There are also some highly spiritual books—
And you hoard already, little banker (no choice),
In dense dry ovaries, green pomegranates,
Every egg you will ever pay out on speculation,
Four hundred maybe in your fertile years.
Each one, of thousands (you are chocked, for safety;
Roed like a shad against loneliness, extinction),
Guards already in final form, unknown as your death,
Some of the instructions I might have passed to Man—

A collateral share of my parents at least,
My share of parents extending to Adam.

Man may yet do without them.
(Can he? Probably not. Not with them either,
Despite the chance I might have made the necessary boy,
Second Child—shared at least, his paternal great-uncle).
If our picture is omen, you may seal your vaults,
Say the monthly No to the monthly hope,
Balk every try at blind continuance;
For though, in the frame, my hands strain to hold you,
Transmit by osmosis a few lies I know
(Simple news, harsh as earwax—years from now,
Look and guess; too late; you'll have learned),
You struggle to escape—me, your volunteering life
That swells each instant in you, presses every wall—
And you laugh, not with me but elsewhere, outward.
I know in retrospect that you laugh at the sky
Northwest of my roof; but what decked the sky
For you that day?—that evening, evening light.
What vision? What clear shaft opening to joy?
Like a white baby seal—a dugong calf!—
You paddle the June air around us toward freedom.

I am laughing for the cameraman (your laughing father)
So I do not notice—and wouldn't mind.
Here, I have you safely—my arms vs. yours—
And if, in years, your struggles wrench you loose,
Award you solitude, sterility, space,
The world will return you (in hunger or duty—
It has brought me to you; I am choosing to hold you,
For this one evening) or itself detain you,
Trap you—raving, gnashing; feed you its diet.

Look. Neither of us noticed the news of that day
(You rapt in babyhood, I in pleasure),
The bedrock above which we hung and giggled.
Our picture, pitiless monitor, preserves it:
Even the hammock we swing in is a net.

FRANK MANLEY

Unbuilding

All summer long the apples fell
on the bleeding tin of the roof
and exploded up the valley like a shot
that stopped the summer dead
like a damn fool hunter
from Atlanta gotten loose,
mired to his ass in the blackberry canes,
firing distress in the head
high weeds of the abandoned fields,
or tripped on his rifle and died out of season.

And buried myself in the stomped out place,
mired in a slashing of blackberry canes,
usually at work unbuilding the barn,
I'd pause, the hammer misfired in my hand,
and listen for whatever it was
got loose, for the sound of hammers
more distant, echoes but never the same,
unbuilding unbuilding.

In winter now the roof is gone.

The axe squared rafters frame the sky,
and the apples fall in their season,
catch for a time where the roof should be
and go on through in silence.
And the deer come down from the mountains at night
crossing the flattened fields in silence,
utterly beyond themselves, gigantic
in the moonlight. They pause in silence at the frame,
in silence go on through and gorge themselves.

VAN K. BROCK

The Daydream

I fell asleep by a hollow tree and woke
to an injured boar
men and boys had branded in mid-day rituals
with new moons, effigied suns, stars and pinwheels.
And they on their outing were chasing the boar
on their cycles, armed with chains and lassos.

I knew this boar was loosed from the city zoo,
and now the greased animal and motors came squealing,
smelling of burning hair, flesh and petroleum,
leaving odors on flowers
crushed beneath their charging and spurted
with blood and exhaust fumes.

As I awoke—bracing myself
to encounter the boar, bearing down,
and the men, their voices drowned in their engines,
raking the woods, with the boar as their leader—
I found myself fully alive
to the bitter-scented wild flowers matted in my sweat

and a calm I would have thought endless

except for the splotches of sunlight
or the birds petitioning the silence
or gnats crawling on my face.
But lying there, wrestling that daydream, I knew
that even if they found that wild boar

stained with the blood of those arrested men
or that if the men and the boar were both dead
that it would always be charging me,
until, asleep, I found a way to meet it, head-on,
and grip it by its tushers or ears or hooves, nor wake
a moment before that boar discovered my eyes.

LEON ROOKE

For Love of Madeline

EARLIER THIS year, in the remote village of El Flores, in the state of Michoacán which is itself remote—in El Flores then, which is one of the many poor villages lying nearby to the big lake there (but creeping away from the water's edge in cozy and random turns up the mountain because they have long since learned to distrust the lake during the rainy season—which in El Flores is most of the year)—in El Flores, I say, there appeared one morning, tacked to four trees at the four corners of the Plaza Principal and to the green-crusted statue of Don Vasco around which the crumbling jardín is built, these hand-painted signs bearing the signature of the town's most noted citizen, Sr. Gómez:

TO THE PUBLIC

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS INVITED

DRAMATIC FORCEFUL PERSONALITY TIRING
OF FAMILIAR BATTEL OF WILS SEEK SUB-
MISSIVE ENTROVERTED FAMALE TO SHARE
LIFE OF LOVE WEALTH Y ADVENTURE. APPLY
CAFE BODEGA.

The signs were displayed in such a manner that it was possible for one to read them from the outdoor tables of any of the three cafes look-

ing on to the main plaza, and from the fourth side as well. Here stood the simple whitewashed cathedral and its few stalls selling candles and plastic saints and newspaper sheets which women—tourists, of course—with uncovered heads might occasionally rent for twenty centavos.

Madeline, a determined step or two ahead of her companion, Raymond, had read the signs this morning from all four sides, first while circling the plaza in an attempt to delay a decision as to which restaurant they might attend (and thus to delay breakfast which they could not afford or perhaps hoping by such malingering to circumvent the issue altogether), and again when she emerged—to the distress of Raymond, by the way—from the cathedral with the sheet of newsprint over her head. He resented the twenty centavo expense and insisted, rather querulously, that it was too late for prayer to do them any good. "Especially," he said, "—Especially as we do not believe in God, anyway."

One might have seen Madeline's thin lips press her teeth, her pale, long arms whip out and wrench the paper into halves. Might have seen her, that is, turn on him in momentary rage, taking quick breaths that stopped short of her lungs and left her skin spotted, her fingers white. (Her tantrums as a child had been intense and regular and, let us say, successful; she was a nervous, opinionated girl, much inclined to quick fits even now.)

"Especially," said Raymond, who had long since ceased to be frightened of her, "—Especially, as you are such a fool that God, if he did exist, would only laugh."

Madeline, as usual, had not favored him with a verbal reply. She had hugged her stomach and marched off to the Bodega and sat down.

Now—and for some time now—the two of them had been seated under the portico at the Bodega, Madeline sipping at water she suspected was impure, and Raymond engrossed in the news sheet—rehabilitated with great care—which he could not understand. He looked up, glancing at her, and now looking down at the lake which had risen during the night, volunteered his thoughts in a tired, petulant way: "I don't see why we have to eat here. I don't see why we couldn't go to the market and get a peso glass of juice or maybe a melon or some bananas that would cost practically nothing. I don't know what the hell you think

we're going to do about lunch, not to mention dinner. It's times like these—I don't mind saying it—times like this, you gripe my ass."

Madeline shook her head gently, smiling in a polite way that either meant she was not listening to him or that she did not care what he did. The smile lingered, if only to annoy him, which fact Raymond realized as he let his gaze pass from lake to cathedral to plaza—as he let himself look anyplace but at her. He knew perfectly well why they were not again at the marketplace. Even its sight now made her ill. For the past five days she had been suffering a mild tourista—the pain was not bad but neither would it leave her. Its small inconveniences had first embarrassed her; now the condition made her furious and she would clench her teeth, breathe her short breaths, when asked whether she felt better or worse.

I'll remain calm, the girl was thinking now. I won't let him know how much his very sight disgusts and infuriates me. She quietly stretched her hand out on the table beside the silverware which the waiter had brought long before. He had yet to bring the menu which Madeline was anxious for, wanting to see for herself what they could not afford.

As for Raymond, now that he had told her how he felt, he was perfectly content to sit. He believed that if only more people would sit and think and take life easy the world would be a far better place. He was, in fact, capable of believing that if he sat here long enough this morning, thinking and watching and taking life easy, then all their troubles would go away. It was largely this attribute—and Madeline's greed—that had reduced them to their present economic status. Between them they had sixteen pesos.

"Where we slept," said Raymond—but here he paused. A man in a white suit was drifting by, bowing, heavily ringed fingers clutching his lapels. "Where we slept," said Raymond, "it's under water now. But I don't suppose anyone has noticed."

Madeline did not reply. She was watching two ants on the table. The ants had thus far successfully moved a crust of bread from the center to the ledge. A third ant had joined them for a while but she did not see it now. One of the two ants was now reconnoitering along the edge, seeking the best route down. Madeline picked up the bread

crumb and returned it to the center. She watched without expression as the two ants immediately began chasing about in broken directions. A fly on her elbow seemed to be watching them. I will not speak to him, the girl thought. I will not talk to him unless it becomes utterly necessary.

A man's shadow fell between their table and the sun.

"Mademoiselle has been to El Flores before?"

The polite, chivalric voice at an adjacent table made her turn. The fly on her arm lifted away and spun in the sun. The speaker, dressed in his white linen suit, stood tilted off his heels with one arm tucked high behind him. He was very tall for a native of the region—so Mady thought—and she waited to see his eyes which were shielded by a white sombrero.

"Mademoiselle would like perhaps the sights pointed to her?"

He rocked on his heels and now slung the other arm behind him as well. Madeline could see enough of his face to ascertain the local bones and coloring. The mademoiselle to whom he spoke had raised one shoulder high about her neck. He might not have been there at all—so her pose maintained—an obstruction between herself and the sun. She was eating a yellow melon and her hand, resting on the Cerveza portion of the Carta Blanca table top, gripped the base of a tall glass of orange juice as if she thought someone might want to take it from her.

"I might place me some signs too," Raymond said. He was staring off across the plaza at nothing in particular. "Wanted, one good ticket out of here. Y no vuelta either." His eyes swept lazily across the patrons seated at the other open-air cafes, and came to momentary rest on Madeline. She was now looking down Calle de Agua to where a fisherman sat with his feet drawn up under him, mending a butterfly net.

"They don't use those nets for fishing, you know," Raymond said. "It's strictly the tourist bit." He saw Madeline close her eyes, clenching her face tight. He watched to see how long it would be before she breathed. But then he remembered how much this sort of thing bored him and he looked instead at the ants. They had found the bread and now there were five of them. When he observed that Madeline's eyes

were open again he reached forward and pressed a finger against the bread, crumbling it into numerous small pieces. He saw Madeline press her hands to her face and he stared a moment, considering whether she would cry.

"The Mademoiselles, they are desiring company, yes?"

The man in the white suit was now at another table where two middle-aged ladies sat with their backs to the plaza and the sun. They wore the El Flores rebozos, one orange and the other red, and the El Flores sandals made of white leather stapled crudely to rubber-tire soles. Their feet seemed very clean. "*This* Mademoiselle and *this* Mademoiselle, the situation is an emergency, no?"

Neither of the two ladies bothered to reply. They were waiting, too. In each of the three cafes around the plaza the Norteamericanos were awaiting breakfasts—desayuno—which might, or might not, arrive.

"Wanted!" said Raymond, smiling and shaking the rigid shoulder of Madeline beside him, "—a one-way ticket the hell out of here!" She shook her shoulder free and adjusted her chair so that she might be just beyond his reach. The movement was not alone enough to satisfy, though she remained in this position briefly. Then she moved her chair again, straightened, and in a series of tight, violent stabs, swept ants and crusts to the floor. Raymond gave light applause.

The sun was suddenly obscured and both looked quickly to the sky—as did most other patrons seated in the cafes around the plaza. The cloud passed. It was too early—even for the rainy season—for rain. Across the way, at La Chica, on grounds leased from the Posado de Don Vasco, a bent woman with a black rebozo wrapped around what she claimed to be either her dead or sleeping child, was threading through the tables, her palms cupped to receive whatever centavos might be offered. A dark gentleman in rags, holding a tall tin cup such as those milk-peddlers employ, squatted at the entranceway, his feet bound by a clever arrangement of cloth, rope, and twigs.

"Maybe we could get our dinero back from them," Raymond said. "You think we could?" His voice was soft, as though by such modulation he hoped to serve notice of his restraint. As though he meant to say, "You can worry but, as for me, I have nothing to worry about."

Or perhaps he spoke softly only because the wind—and the situation—invited softness now.

"Three lousy pesos," said Madeline. She drank the last of the warm water in her glass to disguise her sneer. To drown the words her mouth yet could feel. She thought: God, I've done it now. Broken my silence, the last weapon I had. And replaced the glass, thinking: What a fool I am to talk to him.

But the man with her did not notice his victory. A young Mexican in a grey, splattered Volkswagen was circling the plaza, the top of his head concealed behind the fringe of a red satin curtain that adorned each window. A plastic Jesus danced from the rearview mirror and a host of other such symbols were attached to a rear window pedestal. The car boasted a Michoacán plate but it was not an El Flores car. He circled the square a second time and pulled up now at the vacant taxi zone beside a sign clearly reading SE PROHIBE ESTACIONAR. He did not get out. A boy on the curb with a sponge and bucket stood regarding him.

"It is his first car today," Raymond said. "Ortega is not yet ready to go to work."

"That is not it at all," snapped the girl—her chair scraped over the uneven concrete and several people, including the man in the white suit, turned to stare at her. "Ortega knows perfectly well that the man does not want his car washed."

It was Raymond's turn to sneer. "Why," he asked, leaning on an elbow toward the girl, "—why doesn't the man want his car washed?"

"That isn't the question," said Madeline—her voice snapped right and left and several of the Mexican men seated nearby were nodding their heads. "The boy isn't going to ask the man if he wants his car washed because the boy knows the Mexican hasn't got a peso between himself and hell." The men nearby were grinning and nodding though of course they had no idea what she was saying. "No more," said the girl, "than the three lousy pesos you gave those miserable beggars would stand between us and it, between us and anything else you could name." The men now grinned more widely and passed inaudible comment back and forth between themselves. They did not understand her—*No en-*

tiendo? No entiendo? Cómo?—but before her period of unaccustomed silence they had seen her for many days waving her arms and slicing the air and spitting out a variety of sounds containing the name of her lazy friend, Ramón.

They watched now to see in what manner he would respond—for sometimes he too would wave his arms and screech—but he was instead looking past the Cafe Alameda to Calle de San Francisco where now they looked too. A delegation of officials from the municipal building had emerged. Three of them wore suits which seemed made of glass, and the fourth, whose clothes did not reflect the sun, was gesturing vehemently.

The man in the white suit, to whom Madeline was giving her attention, was now seated alone at a table away from the sun.. He had removed his hat—it rode vaquero-style on one narrow, quivering knee—but Madeline could not see his eyes. The jar of Nescafé Instantáneo had been brought him and he was stirring spoonfuls into a large white mug of steaming water.

The waiter passed through the tables and a number of people—Norteamericanos—shouted for his attention, but he ignored them, again disappearing inside.

"Café negro, Café con leche—hell, just coffee," groaned Raymond, whose own voice had been among those calling for the boy. "You wouldn't think that's too much to ask."

"The Mademoiselle would see the sights?" the man in the white suit was saying to no one, "—the Mademoiselle is perhaps only passing through? What does the Mademoiselle desire?"

Other patrons were drifting in and selecting tables or drifting in and standing a while and then drifting out again. Several of those who believed they had been waiting too long at the Bodega were drifting out to go and wait at another cafe, just as others from the Alameda and La Chica were quitting their tables to come here. The cafe owners found this practice reasonable: a customer gained for each customer lost. All who truly desired food at this time of day eventually would be served. Moreover, waiters at the Bodega, at La Chica, at the Alameda would not grow restless and haughty and demand more pay, as they had dif-

fent faces to serve each day. So long as their tips could not be correctly anticipated—so long as the waiters were happy and satisfied—why it might be some time—weeks perhaps—before they terminated their service with, say, the Bodega, for a more promising relationship with the Alameda or La Chica.

The man in the white suit understood all this—he acted like a man who did. Now pouring his hot milk from the ceramic jug, now stirring, now adding spoonfuls of coarse sugar into the mug. He was in no hurry. It was easy to see he was satisfied. The sombrero bucked vaquero-style on his thin knee, but not because he desired to go anyplace. Madeline, watching him, waited for him to drink, for then he might lift his face—but she was wrong for she saw him now dipping his mouth to meet the rim of the mug, sucking up the liquid between his teeth.

"The café is good, no? Es bueno? Correcto? Buenos días, Mademoiselle. The Mademoiselle is in the hot-seat, no?"

Madeline turned. There was no one behind her. The man in the white suit was addressing his remarks directly to her.

"The Mademoiselle has desires? Sí? The Mademoiselle is ambitious for the food?" He smacked his hand on the table edge, made a sucking noise with his tongue between his teeth—and immediately the waiter appeared. He lifted his fingers in a casual outward motion and the waiter nodded and hastened off, appearing a moment later with a single menu which he held to his chest until Madeline reached for it.

"Well, grass-uss," Raymond said, turning to the man in the white suit,"—"much-us grass-us, you know." The man shrugged and turned aside.

Along the cobbled street in front of the Bodega the municipal officials were passing. One or two citizens from the Alameda, from La Chica, the owner of the zapatería, and the moustached proprietor of the peluquería, had joined them. Now they had paused before the Bodega to invite companionship. Cómo está usted? The day is promising, no? We have been asking "Where are the clouds?" It is our intention now to walk to the water and measure its progress during the night. Someone has been saying the lean-to of the Americanos is washing out to sea. Can this be? We ask you! Mañana, what height will the water

be? It is wise to be cautious, no? And only our duty as good citizens of El Flores. Who will go with us now?

No one from the Bodega joined their group. Its composition was too official for their tastes and, yes, there was another matter. Most Bodega patrons had been looking across the plaza at the boy with the bucket who had at last approached the man who sat in the car behind the fringed red curtain. They could hear the boy's thin voice and the man's muffled response. The boy, whose name was Ortega, was saying he would watch the car. For a peso he would see no one stole the hubcaps or the crooked antenna or perhaps even the license plate. For a peso he would watch it very good. The man was evidently inquiring what need he had of the boy's service when he was himself in the car and perfectly capable of maintaining his own vigilance over the machine. The boy was saying, "But, ah, you are sleeping much of the time. I could myself steal the hubcaps and the antenna and perhaps the license plate."

It seemed—to those watching from the Bodega—that the man in the grey car would have to give Ortega the peso if he wanted to get back to sleep again. Finally the boy got into the car with the man, and the man drove off with him—and none of the people in any of the three cafes understood this at all.

"Was that Ortega who got in the car?" they asked.

"No," they agreed, "it was someone else, for why would Ortega get in the car of the man from someplace else? No, it was not Ortega."

"We agree, yes," others added, "but if it was not Ortega who got in the car then where is he now? Where is his bucket and his sponge? No, it must have been Ortega who got in the car for otherwise his sponge and his pail would be near the fountain where they always are."

"Yes, it was Ortega who got in the car," they all could agree. After all, he had been seen talking to the man. And, after all, it was true that Ortega could never be counted on. He might very well have got in the car. He would return soon—in an hour or two—before nightfall—and say it was the Saint—El Santo from the cine and the comic book—who was in the car. A few kilometers out of El Flores they had put masks over their faces, and driven thus to other villages around the

lake which were not so well prepared for the flood. Whose foolish officials had not the presence of mind to stir from their chambers and go to measure the level of water. Possibly this very minute Santo and Ortega were pulling goats and cows and children and old men from the swollen lake.

"For that," they all agreed, "is the way Ortega passes the day when he isn't charging a peso for the car. And sometimes even then it is El Santo who pushes the sponge."

Raymond and Madeline had their breakfast by this hour—bolillos and mermelada—in the sun, to the clatter of dishes and the occasional lifted voice of someone in the street or in the plaza calling to someone in another place. The rolls were stale but they voiced no complaints. For the marmalade was good and more of it than they could eat. Only once did Madeline rush off to the *damas*, but she was soon back, submerging her irritation and the occasional acute pain in a bickerish concern for whether Raymond had eaten more than his share.

A small boy whose patched britches reached his knees loitered by, selling Chicklets which no one bought. A man and a burro saddled with wood came by and stood for perhaps five minutes in the street between cathedral and plaza. When he had accomplished what he set out to do he slapped the flank of the donkey and both moved on a few yards to stand in another place. The cooks left for the market with their baskets and plastic bags, getting ready for the comida trade.

The breakfasting people sat on, their ranks thinning somewhat. Some moved to the stone benches in the plaza and some simply went away, while others moved from shade to sun to shade again. The municipal delegation alighted a second time from their red building on the Calle de San Francisco, proceeding with a second measurement of the water's depth, for it seemed no one had recorded the first.

"The situation is perverse," they said. "Obstinado," the men in the glass suits claimed. "For this, one must—*vigilar de cerca*—keep one's eye peeled!" True, the lake seemed not much higher now. "Un poco, no más!" True, the sky did not seem a threat now. But in the meantime—*en el interin*—they would keep their eyes peeled, for that

was no more than wise. Their fourth member continued from time to time to wave his arms excitedly.

The man in the white suit remained aloof from these manifestations of life in El Flores—remained enchanted, or so it appeared, as now and again he might rise and journey about the tables, seeing to this or that Mademoiselle's health, her desires, extending his good hopes, proffering his services. Enchanted, yes, for it gave him not the slightest pause that the ladies inevitably turned their shoulders to him, shielded their faces, allowed no exchange, uncivil or otherwise, to escape their lips. He sat now with one white boot at rest on the black stand of the shining, brass-edged box of the small shoeshine boy whose own shoes were very dirty. The boy maintained a scowl of deep concentration, his tongue caught between his lips. He had a scab on his ear and infrequently a white hand would shoot up and flick at it as if dislodging flies. The man's sombrero rested low over his eyes; his white coat, meticulously folded, stretched across his lap.

Madeline's companion, Raymond, had left his table—had gone and come and gone again. He was making trips to the bank—the Banco Nacional on the other side of the plaza—and reporting back his progress there. He had been awaiting—they had been awaiting—a check for many days now.

"They've got it," Raymond would say. "I know they have. My bank tells me they sent it! Of course the Banco Nacional has it. Oh, they're so corrupt, so inefficient! But they've got it, I know they have. I'll have them tear up the place until they find it—where else could it be!"

To these assertions—to his meek eyes which said to her, "Isn't it true? Don't you find it reasonable, this that I say?"—to these Madeline merely returned a gaze of bleak sobriety that lent all the more force to her feelings of indolent outrage. There *was* no check. She shifted her chair once more that the sun might not shine directly in her face; she sighed and turned and averted her eyes; she scratched her shoulder and rubbed her lids and wrestled about in the chair until she sat just so . . . waiting for him to be gone again . . . waiting to see him trot off across the square and circle the statue of Don Vasco and jump the rock wall there where

the sign read EXCLUSIVO SITIO NO ESTACIONARSE. Waiting to see him disappear one more time into the apologetic confines of the Banco Nacional. There *was* no check. There would *be* no check. There had never *been* a check. And if the man in the brown suit repeated *Sí, Sí, mañana, por cierto mañana*, as she had heard him do, then that man was a fool—though perhaps no more than she had been.

She got up now and moved to another table, away from her nest of bread crumbs and marmalade which had been accumulating flies. She watched the man in the white suit spit on his fingers and relay the spit to his shoes, in apparent dissatisfaction with their glossy shine. The sky struck dark again but the overcast was temporary; the sun was bold behind it and the wind was churning the clouds along at such speed that she could feel the shadows changing on her face. "Wanted," she said to herself, "one good word from the Banco Nacional."

"Wanted," she continued under her breath, "—one good wanted, want wanting wanted now." The speech surprised her: she rarely talked gibberish and never to herself. But there are times, she thought—this might be one of them—when gibberish accomplishes where all else fails. She fixed her shoulder straps and slipped her broad feet into the Cuernavaca sandals and rose from the table. She turned her face a quick moment into the passing edge of sun, blinked, and knotted her fists at her side—and walked over to the table of the man in white who was just then saying to three ladies waiting for the cajero to take their money:

"Mademoiselle can perhaps explain. The Mademoiselles would like perhaps the sights to see them now?"

She came to stand between the ladies and the man. The ladies were nervous, bleached, new to El Flores. Their money fluttered like lazy hands.

"Señor Gómez?"

The sun, obscured though it might be, was hot on the side of her face and a fly was crawling on her neck—or perhaps it was sweat. She had the taste of marmalade in her mouth. She waited for the man to tilt his sombrero back and raise his head and look at her. The three ladies drifted away, chatting amiably—laughing now.

"Good morning, yes?" the man inquired of Madeline, in his polite, chivalric voice, "—you have business, no?" He tilted the sombrero back and elevated his head but Madeline saw that his eyes were closed.

She sat at his table, let her elbows fall, hooking her fingers behind her neck.

"You are fine, yes?" he said. His lips curled into a contemptuous smile. "It is good to see you again. Have you improved? No more the tourista, no? Is there yet the difficulty with your friend's money at the bank?" He waved the jeweled fingers across his face and smiled, saying, "Ah these banks! They have no humanity, no finer sensibilities, do you think?"

The girl waited for his eyes to open. She thought if ever he would open his eyes and she could see into him—his character, his soul—she could believe she was doing this. She had quite forgotten that such sighting had never served her well. She leaned close now, whispering: "I've come about the position." She moistened her lips and spoke again: "In response to your ad." She saw his mouth widen—he tilted back his chair and transferred the sombrero to his knee.

"But how unfortunate," he murmured. "How do you say it, that the position is filled."

She watched his closed lids; she could see his eyes quivering and the spread of blue veins in the skin. His cheeks held the faintest touch of red, as though they might have been lightly brushed with rouge. The chair legs came down and she felt his hand fall heavily on her thigh. "Ah, but the business is concluded, you see. How regrettable! If I had known! For the emergency situation is intolerable, believe me, I am a man who knows. Lo siento, Mademoiselle. I am sorry but, as you say it, my hands are tied. You see?"

The girl saw very well. She had been watching him all morning, no one else had talked to him. It was the game he would play. Raymond, too, had had his games.

They sat on together. The sun climbed and the Plaza Principal filled and the comida crowd began wandering in. The paths of those from the Alameda, from La Chica, from the Bodega, intersected; gossip and news and speculations were exchanged. The lake, it was established

now, was very definitely on the rise. Already its rim was touching the first stones of Calle de Agua. The man from the oficina de telégrafo was rumored to have said that three of the more distant villages on the lake were now totally submerged, but this was scoffed at for the man from the telégrafo had a weakness for pulque and moreover the service had never been so fast before. Now and then a man would run down and squat on his heels, testing the water's depth—a mimic of the municipal officials—and his friends would laugh and enact similar tests themselves. The odd child stood around its edge tossing rocks or sticks or dung into the cloudy water. Many others were arriving, too, to observe at close hand the lake's rising. The helados vendor bypassed those seated in the plaza and pushed his cart down Calle de Agua, while behind him trudged the weathered "chicharones" man, bound in rags, conveying on his head the large basket of fried porkskins and his bottles of chili sauce. The sky darkened and no one appeared to take offense.

Madeline and the man in white had nothing to say about this quickening along their front. At one point she moved out of her lethargy, her despair, long enough to grasp his arm and thereby claim his attention once more. "But what if it doesn't work out?" she demanded. "What if you find you can't get along with this person you've taken on?"

The three bells in the three steeples of the church on the plaza toned midday—or some such hour. In El Flores one could never be sure. In another minute—in another five or ten—the more festive bells of San Antonio on the mountainside would reply.

"It might not, you know," Madeline said. She released his arm and settled back in her chair. "American girls don't like to take a lot of shit."

The man grinned. For the first time, Madeline saw into his eyes. "Ah," he said, "but in that event I will have an opening, yes?" He let her go on looking; he let her see what she would see. Then he rose from his table, blinked, gave her a despondent leer—and walked out of the Bodega, bowing wide to the tables, saying, "Mademoiselle will forgive? The Mademoiselles are satisfied?"

She watched him go. She watched him take the steps of the jardín,

circle the statue of Don Vasco, saunter at leisure down the walkway with its erratic growth of weed and flower—watched him sweep gracefully up the next series of steps and ascend into the winding Calle de la Noche de la mil Lunas. She expected him to turn and wave, to turn and lift his hat, but he did not. He rounded a turn and was gone.

She exhaled, bore down heavily on the arms of her chair. "He'll take me," she said aloud. "He has to, he has no one else." She continued looking up Calle de la Noche de la mil Lunas. The street emptied into the mountains and there at its top a black cloud had settled. Any minute now the rain would come, perhaps it was already raining up there. Earlier, she had seen Raymond—or believed she had—threading his way carefully up the street of moons with his green backpack filled and their last ten pesos in his pockets. But possibly not. Possibly he was yet in the bank, bluffing the manager with his talk of a check that would never come. It was even conceivable—it was not entirely out of the realm of possibility—that any moment now he would come racing across the plaza, waving in his hands more than enough money to take them away from El Flores.

Possible—remotely so—but not likely. In all probability he was up on the mountain now, waving his thumb. Looking out for a man in a grey car. Saying good riddance to all that. Saying to himself, "What a hassle that Madeline was!"

She prayed for rain. She hoped the rain would thunder down and wash him in a panic off the road.

On cue, the rain came. It thundered down, whipped about by a simultaneous rising of wind. It drove over stones and pelted trees and formed a thick screen over the lake. It drove El Flores—it even drove Madeline, eventually—indoors. Where she remained for perhaps an hour, perhaps more, as the rain did not abate. One might have seen her finally—a lean, white girl, clothes adhering to her frame—streaking across the plaza in the falling rain, bounding up the steps of the cathedral and shaking its thick dark doors which of course were now closed to give the building protection against the wind and rain. And now turning, fleeing up the street of moons, slipping on the wet, gushing

stones—banging her knees, wiping rain from her face as she ran—but coming at last to the famous tinsel-sheeted door of Sr. Gómez. Might have seen her, I say, knocking her frail fists against the door—cursing—though the wind and rain took her cries and the door remained closed. For so it was earlier this year before the lake washed over El Flores and made it into another place.

KAY McCLELLAND

Why I Will Not Divorce My Husband

I PLAYED WITH my analyst again today, trying first to figure out what problems he thought I'd been having and then assuming the appropriate role. It is the same every session. Today as I sat waiting in his office, I imagined all the overweight, dough-in-cellophane housewives who must have sat in that same sagging chair, crushing out half-smoked cigarettes in the same dirty ashtray. I separated myself from them by reading *Time* instead of *McCalls* and decided there is no harm in what I do with the analyst. I enjoy the intrigue; I support the analyst and simplify his job by acting out the symptoms he expects; and my husband receives satisfaction from thinking our problems are being dealt with. Everything is as it should be.

I had an encounter with a man in the parking lot just before the session. I saw him as I was walking toward the doctor's office. He was tall above the cars and his hair was blacker than any I'd ever seen. Approaching him, I slowed my pace and watched as he got into his car, sat there a minute, and then got out again to take off his suit coat. Something about his frame and the planes of his face made me think he was European. Certainly he was too musical in his movements—weaving his way through the cars, folding his lovely coat—to have lived in the South all his life. When I passed him, I caught his eyes for a moment, held them,

smiling, and then looked away. All the way to the building I could feel him watching me, scaling my body with his eyes, and that was all I wanted. Had he moved to follow me, had I not heard his car door slam and the motor start as soon as I was in the building, I would have been uncomfortable. For the extent of my flirtation and infidelity is this: I try to catch and hold the eyes of dark-haired men.

The focus of the session was my insomnia. "And when you get up in the middle of the night and put the clock in the closet," Dr. Kazman asks me, "does your husband wake up?"

"No."

"And how do you react? Does this disturb you?" His eyebrows are raised. He is looking sympathetic so as to persuade my confidence.

"Yes," I say, and tell tales of neglect and inability-to-communicate, hesitating so that he will have a chance to coax me, and then slipping into dreams about snakes and knives, making comparisons between my husband and my father, leading the doctor along. He will conclude something about my subconscious and my childhood. He will tell my husband we are all making progress. My husband will be relieved; the analyst will be well paid; there is no harm.

Nonetheless, taking the freeway home at midday, I felt unusually tense. I have not slept at all for two nights and I needed the vodka I drank with my lunch. I am feeling more relaxed now. The weather is cool enough this afternoon to have the windows open. Another month and the days will steam—that's the South for you. We have lived here the two years since we married. We will probably always live here, sinking in like fence posts, finally covered over with honeysuckle.

But on days like today, with the windows open and the wind coming up from the river, I catch the smell of California, pushing its way like a slide of sand, steady through the sticky dime-store scent of sweet olives, and I understand again why it is best that I live here. When I lie awake at night, when I stand in the dark with my cheek against the window while my husband poisons the air with the rhythm of his breathing, it is California I am thinking of, California which possesses me.

As a child I lived for a while on the bay at Long Beach. That was my initial contact with California, and it was a brief one. My father's

firm kept relocating him, so we did not live there, or any other place, much more than three years. But for some reason, perhaps because I was at the impressionable age of five when we moved there, it is the years on the bay I remember most vividly on days like this one.

We rented a breezy two-story house beaded in among others similar to it in space and scale. Though our neighborhood was full of beautiful colors—the white sandy yards permitting anything in the way of house painting—the lots themselves were as regular and monotonous as squares of toilet tissue rolling out to the beaches. But this bothered me only on the way home from school, and seemed more than made up for by the colors and by the fact that our house was located almost equidistant from both the bay and the ocean: midsummer mornings, up early and running barefooted on concrete already hot, you could be at either place in half a minute.

I had only one young playmate whom I truly respected. Her name was Georgeanna Youngblood. She had five older brothers, a box turtle, and the straightest, ugliest hair I'd ever seen. She was absolutely the most terrible thing in the neighborhood. When I first started playing with her, I was a first grader, my sister Ann was in the third grade, and Georgeanna, though only the age of Ann, was as big as any fifth grader.

Her reputation was tremendous, and Ann and I, her nearest neighbors, were practically the only children who dared to play with her. She made us into her slaves. She convinced us that her turtle was a blood-thirsty snapper trained to bite off fingers on command. She frightened us even more with stories about a torture chamber down under the porch of her house. If she wanted, she could stretch our legs until one was two feet longer than the other, and if we ever told anyone about this, she warned repeatedly, her voice dropping to a powerful whisper, she would roll our tongues out like pie crust dough.

Both intrigued and terrified, Ann and I returned to play with Georgeanna again and again. Whatever that giant girl told us to do we did with great energy. We picked sour-stem clover for her and her turtle to chew on. We called her King George and fanned her with palm leaves as she sat, rocking and chewing, on her front porch. We dis-

obeyed her only once, and that was the time she ordered us to bring her our grey Persian cat Tinsel as a sacrifice to the turtle. Ann and I dropped out of our roles to refuse. George was incensed, and chased us off the porch, running after us a way, screaming out furious threats.

We stayed away from her about two weeks. When we returned she seemed glad to see us, so we knew nothing truly terrible would come from our disloyalty. But one night not long after, Ann woke up screaming that her fingers were gone and that she had seen George's turtle sitting on the end of our bed, smiling like a cartoon. After her dream, Ann's fascination with George diminished and she was less willing to be her slave. Gradually she went back to other playmates, satisfied with dolls and hopscotch, and I became known as the only child who would play with George. I enjoyed obeying her commands and dodging her turtle as she kept me intrigued and worshipful with her stories of amazing devices for torture. I liked George. Though we were never close pals and our relationship was a strange one, I was comfortable with the quality of her friendship.

But more than anything, I liked to walk on the boardwalk, the boardwalk by the ocean. The ocean was too cold for swimming and most people liked the bay better, so the crowds stayed there. Every evening after dinner we would help my mother stack the dishes and then the whole family would go outside. My parents and Ann would take my brother in his carriage strolling down the sidewalk that ran along the bay. I usually started out with them, and then would disappear, as they called it. ("She's disappeared again," I knew they said. And I delighted in the idea of it.) Certainly they assumed I met some playmates, or waded in the bay. Had they suspected I went walking alone by the ocean they would have watched me more closely. The ocean was almost deserted in the cool of the evening and my father regarded the highway parallel to it as difficult to cross. They would never have let me go there by myself.

I was not a willfully disobedient child, but every evening that I could, I crossed the highway and walked along the boardwalk, knowing that this was implicitly forbidden. I loved it, loved the smell of it, the wet thick hissing of wind up from the ocean. I would walk there until

dusk, placing the sound of my feet on the wood between the rush of cars on the highway and the rhythmic struggle of the breaking waves. Alone on the boardwalk, shivering from the cold, carried along by the pace of my walking, I felt that I was completely my own.

When I was eight, my father was transferred and we moved to Connecticut. We spent only one winter there and I was glad. The air was fine, thin and sharp-edged like razors, and the glare from the white snow was of an intensity like sand in the afternoon. But mother, fearing health and doctor's bills, very rarely let us go outside. I spent a miserable winter quarreling with Ann and watching the yard from the big picture window in our den.

After a year in Connecticut we lived a short while in Alabama and then Oklahoma, finally settling in Louisiana. We had not been there much more than a year when I began to feel desperately that I wanted to leave. There is only one season in Louisiana—a sort of tropical mush of heat and rain and humidity: one season with slight variations so that the winter is more wet than humid and the spring is more humid than wet and the summer is a year's worth of winter wet and spring humidity burned into one hot day—wet and burning so that steam rises from the sidewalks at noon in August. Everything seemed artificially green and swollen with the dampness, cursed with an excessive fertility that could not contain itself, but aborted out onto the ground, forming layers and layers of rotting logs and moulding leaves which started the cycle again. On the way to school, my socks sagged from the dampness and the wind did not tangle my hair but lumped it.

I was dismayed when it became apparent that we would be staying there. When I was eleven, we bought a house—the first one we had ever owned—and as my parents began to collect antique furniture, I began to brood. Mostly, I kept my moodiness to myself, dealing with it in the dark after Ann was asleep. I would stand at the window and watch the damp air cluster around the trunks of the trees in the yard, watch it swarm around the branches and hang from them like parasitic moss. I thought of the gentle fog up from the ocean and could not be happy in Louisiana.

Occasionally I would get into a black mood I could do nothing about. On those days I would come home from school and stay in my room until mealtime. From the moment I walked into the dining room, my sulking would be obvious, and my parents would attempt to bring me out of it. At first they would address me directly.

"Are you unhappy about something?" one of them would ask. Or, "What's the matter with you today?" And if I answered "nothing." they would place me in the third person and talk to each other, speculating about my problems, gathering material to quiz me.

"How are things at school?" my father would ask.

"Just fine."

"Are you eating your lunches?"

"Yes, m'am." I would not look up from my plate. Ann stared at me intently.

"Well, what's the matter? Are you and Beverly still friends?" No one moved.

"Yes," I would answer, and feeling insulted that they could think my problems were so shallow, would pick up my fork and begin to eat.

"Well," my mother would say, my father would sigh, "you had better quit feeling sorry for yourself, whatever it's about. You just make things unpleasant for everyone. If you can't think or won't tell us what's bothering you, it can't really be that important."

That was a direct accusation, and I would have to respond.

"I'm just unhappy today, that's all."

Then my father would cut into his meat, my mother would butter her bread, Ann would pass the potatoes to Curmie, and one of them would say, "You're just too sensitive a person."

That was the one thing that they could accuse me of that I could accept, and I would bring the movement to a close, perking up, looking thoughtful, and finally saying, "I know I am. I'll try to do better."

I never changed, however, I never let myself adjust to Louisiana or forget California. Nor did I long for California as a place or plan to live there again. California was for me not so much a geographic location as it was a category of my feelings. So when in the summer of my nineteenth year I had the opportunity to return there, I was not at all

certain I wanted to. I was living at home, having finished my second year at the state university. Ann was home too. She was marrying a medical student in September and the house was upset with the plans for her wedding. It all annoyed me. I could not be sympathetic to the fact that Ann loved her fiancé. The idea of being a woman who could be taken home for Sunday dinners and meet the parents did not appeal to me.

In early June we received a letter from my father's aunt in San Diego. We were the only living relatives of this old, difficult, and very rich woman. Every six or seven months we would receive a letter from her, describing some new illness, assuring us that she was managing well in spite of it. This particular letter, however, had a special urgency to it. There were more details about the doctor's diagnosis, about the days in the hospital, more paragraphs about how the woman she lived with, Mrs. Savage, was herself "doing badly." I regarded the letter as both an invitation and a challenge.

I knew I could not stand the summer in Louisiana, and I had no place else to go, so I wrote to my aunt:

> Dear Aunt Elsie, we got your letter and we were all so sorry to hear that you are ill again. We worry so much about you and your health. If you would like, I could come out to California and take care of you—cook and clean and do your shopping. I'm out of school for the summer, and can't think of anything that I'd rather do than visit with you and Mrs. Savage. I don't want you to pay me, of course. Let me know what you would like. Take care. Love, Mary Kay.

I received a reply from her almost by return mail, complete with a check to cover a round trip air ticket and about twenty dollars extra "to spend on the plane." And in the two weeks from the time I wrote her and the day I boarded the jet for San Diego, we got more air-mail, arthritic-distorted letters from California than we had received in five years. "I can think of nothing but Mary Kay coming. . . ."

Aunt Elsie was waiting for me at the airport. During the flight I had worried that I would not be able to recognize her, as I had not seen her in ten years. But as I was coming down the ramp, squinting out

into the darkness, careful of my step, I saw Aunt Elsie, tiny and grey and fuzzy-headed, standing right up against the glass window, waving a flowered handkerchief at me. That woman, I thought, has lived in California for 83 years.

(She is stubborn and irritable and irrational, my father had warned me; she was married, but for only a few years; they say she made her husband an alcoholic; she never had any children so she doesn't understand how to deal with them; she has no patience.)

She had it in her head that I was to be entertained while I stayed with her. And I think my father was wrong about the stubbornness. I think that age and loneliness and staying forever in that dim old house with only ancient Mrs. Savage for company had taken some of it away. Anyway, she was very good to me. I had expected her to lie in bed all day and call for me to fix her soup or to sit on the edge of her bed and read to her, or to bathe her three or four times a week. But she kept her hired housekeeper and told me that I was out in California to have a good time and that I was to be entertained.

So I allowed her to entertain me. She did it in the way that old women entertain other old women. The third day I was there she took me out visiting. Aunt Elsie had a great variety of friends, and they all lived in antique houses full of old china and portraits on the walls and faded rose-printed carpets, antique houses and women with antique names like Edna and Winnie and Lucretia. Once or twice a week we made the rounds, drinking tea or plum brandy and eating little soft cakes.

I put up with the entertaining as I put up with the house routine. It was a simple one, and I learned my place in it quickly. I learned how to pull up the nine paper window shades in the kitchen and the eleven in the living room straight so that they did not tear and noiselessly so that the house stayed quiet. And I learned how to tell which knife-fork-spoon set was Mrs. Savage's, as there was only one set she would eat with, and if either I or the housekeeper made a mistake, she would sit patiently at the table until one of us found the right one.

Every morning I would bring in the paper and Aunt Elsie would say, "All right now, Mrs. Savage. Come and give the paper a bath."

And in a few minutes I would hear Mrs. Savage coming slowly and unevenly from the bedroom. I would bring her an old rag from the kitchen closet and she would carefully, perfectly, wipe off every page, because newsprint was, to them, dirty, and the paper had to be cleaned before it could be read. In the evenings, Aunt Elsie and Mrs. Savage would watch the news on the television from five until eight. Their hearing was poor so they listened to four different news programs and by the third or last one, they would finally begin to understand what was happening in the world that day and Mrs. Savage would put her hand to the side of her face and say over and over, "Oh, dear."

For the first few weeks, I did not mind driving the old women around or putting up with their strange ways. But my aunt began to make me extremely nervous. She wanted so desperately to be certain I was happy that she followed me about, trying to detect my every mood. She worried because I never went anywhere, was certain I wasn't having a good time, and could not understand that I simply wanted to be left alone. I resented somewhat her inability to understand my feelings; she impinged on my privacy. And though I rarely lost my temper with her, I could not be openly affectionate either.

The tension between me and my aunt never came to the surface, and the most significant experience that summer concerned neither her nor Mrs. Savage, but one of their friends. I did not meet this friend until my fifth week in San Diego, as she didn't socialize much and her house was too run-down to entertain company. Aunt Elsie didn't warn me about her or prepare me to meet her. She just told me on a Tuesday that we were going out to dinner Thursday and were going to take Mrs. Savage, if she felt well enough, and a friend of theirs, Flossie, whom I hadn't met.

It was a big thing for the old women, going out to dinner, and Aunt Elsie and Mrs. Savage rested all Wednesday and Thursday for it. Aunt Elsie could dress herself, but she couldn't fix her hair because she had some kind of circulation disease and the blood ran too fast if she raised her hands and arms up for too long. So she called me into her room Thursday afternoon, early, right after her nap, and sat patiently while I brushed her fuzzy hair.

"Now Mary Kay, are you having a good time?" she asked me, watching my face in the mirror.

"Yes, m'am. This is the first vacation I've had in ten years."

"But you don't know any young people here. You know I never had any children so I don't know what young people like. Edna has a grandson in Santa Barbara—."

"No, Aunt Elsie." There were certainly men enough back home, letters enough in the mail. Neither Ann nor I had ever had any trouble attracting male attention, though we were interested in different types. Ann liked hulking football players, substantial men with pressed shirts and trimmed sideburns, while my men were always strange in some way or another. I wanted men vague like shadows and unreliable. I was most comfortable around men who smoked too much, who wore the same clothes day after day, or who could not stay in the same city more than a season or two, dark-haired men with movies in their eyes. Who would have thought that two years after my visit in California I would be back in the South, married to a lawyer son of a lawyer, a man who would be perfectly happy if one day in the future I should be seen by the wives of his business associates, driving a station wagon full of his children, buying instant breakfasts at the A&P? Who would have imagined that I would be sleeping with a man who loves my body and treats it well, but who relates to me emotionally as to a mystery which cannot be solved by the normal mind and which is best left a mystery so that, should difficulty arise, it can be handed over (intact, unmuddled) to the proper authorities for analysis?

"No, Aunt Elsie. I have a boyfriend back home."

"I had new tires put on the Buick. You can drive it anywhere you want. You can go to the zoo or take it to the beach. I'll call Molly and get her to find some girls your age at the church."

"No, Aunt Elsie. I'm really enjoying the rest. And I love the weather. I can't believe that you don't have to have air conditioning. In Louisiana everything is air conditioned. If you don't have an air conditioned car, you just don't go out of your house until after eight in the evening."

"Now, Mary Kay. *That's* what's wrong with you. You've been

spoiled by air conditioning," she said, not watching my face anymore, but shaking her head, making it difficult for me to brush her hair. "I must write your father and tell him how bad air conditioning is. I've never felt so bad in my life as I did when I spent a summer in Houston and had to have air conditioning. I know that it's bad for you. You get so spoiled by it that the least little bit of heat wilts you. Now be sure and tell your father to do something about the air conditioning. There's nothing more important than health."

We left the house around five, Mrs. Savage with her cane and Aunt Elsie holding onto my arm with both of hers and then telling me what was wrong with my driving all the way to the part of town where Flossie lived. I was surprised to see that Flossie lived in a faded wooden house with no shrubbery in front and weeds all along the sidewalk and around the tires of the paint-flaking car parked on the lawn. Flossie must have been standing at the window watching, as she came out as soon as I drove up.

Flossie was a hunchback, tiny and bent, her back arching, her neck bending, her face always turned upward. She carried a foam cushion with her to sit on. She was smiling; tiny old upturned face, bending forward from her hunched back, and smiling.

Flossie had no photographs, and she was the first of Aunt Elsie's friends who didn't. All the others had had photographs of some eligible grandson or nephew whom I was expected to adore. But Flossie, walking down the sidewalk toward the car, carried no photographs, only the foam cushion. She was dressed in the classic habit of women over sixty: a mutely flowered and forever-faded-from-the-beginning dress. And her hair was pulled back tight into a bun, small like the clinched fist of a child. She placed her cushion in the back seat and got into the car. I watched her. She could not do it gracefully, and I saw the deep purple ring of veins high up on her leg. She wore orthopedic shoes, tightly laced and made from that kind of cheap leather that is glossy like the peel of an eggplant.

Aunt Elsie turned around to her and said, "I'd like to present to you my niece, Mary Kay. She's come all the way from Louisiana to take care of me and Mrs. Savage."

"How do you do, Mary Kay," she said, and her voice was small like a child's.

"Just fine. And you?" I had already learned that a great conversation starter was to ask an old woman how she was doing.

"Well, I've been quite well lately. Nothing to complain about. California weather can cure all the foes of body and the woes of soul," she said, laughing. I felt an immediate empathy with her. I tried to see her in the rearview mirror, but I couldn't. Nor could I think of what to say. I could not treat her like Mrs. Savage or my aunt. I couldn't tell her that she looked well or that she had a lovely house, so I was silent.

"Flossie," my aunt said, "don't you think she drives well?"

"She certainly does. She's very careful. Did they teach you to drive at school, Mary Kay?"

"No. My father and my aunt taught me."

"And I bet your aunt's still teaching you. Right Elsie?"

"Well, I certainly am. I couldn't let a little thing like Mary Kay out on the streets in San Diego. Why these California lout-heads would run over her. She's not used to this much traffic. She's from Louisiana." And that, of course, was the greatest apology she could make for me. She didn't know that I had often driven on Canal Street in New Orleans. I drove well and I knew it, so I did not try to argue with her.

The drive to the restaurant was pleasant, as we did not go on the freeway, but through a residential area where the streets were bordered with trees. And the crazy locusts were in every tree, singing like they do on a sunny day when a cloud passes and they think it's night, but a short night, and so sing frantically. Every tree was singing—singing as I came to it, window down, old voices unheard, singing as I passed it, so that the rising and falling never ended; the singing never faded but to start again. And I was back, pacing the boardwalk on the ocean at Long Beach.

The ride was pleasant, but it put me in the wrong mood for dinner. Plodding into the restaurant like a caravan of aged and ailing camels, humpbacked and crippled, irritated me. Mrs. Savage got some kind of tomato sauce all in the corners of her mouth and on her upper lip.

Aunt Elsie told her to wet her napkin in her water glass and wipe off her mouth. But Mrs. Savage couldn't rub hard enough. So Aunt Elsie pushed her plate next to Mrs. Savage's and scraped the meat with the sauce on it into her own plate. Either she was trying to show Mrs. Savage that the meat could be eaten without making a mess, or she was trying to make Mrs. Savage feel better by getting sauce all over her face, too. I do not know which she intended, but I was embarrassed when I looked up to see they both had sauce on their faces.

But Flossie amazed me. She never seemed embarrassed. Not when she put her ragged foam cushion down on the velvet one of the chair. Not when my aunt and Mrs. Savage smeared great sauce-smiles all over their faces. Not when one of them knocked over a glass of wine and burgundy colored the tablecloth with rich red veins. Not even when Aunt Elsie, giddy with the wine, called the waiter over and asked him what kind of animals the dessert was made of, and then burst out laughing. Flossie just smiled, and not secretly either, but openly and confidently, as though she was sure her smile would offend no one.

Flossie was a puzzle to me, her face just above her plate, her neck bent and her head tilted so she could smile over the potato she never ate. In my moodiness and sulking impatience I was uncomfortable next to her. Her smiling scratched my self-confidence. I was unattractive. I was ridiculous, envious. She had a depth of understanding I could not purchase from her, and I felt disturbed and foolish.

It was not the dinner, however, which made the evening so significant, but what I did and realized afterwards. I could not sleep. I would get into bed, cover myself carefully, and then concentrate on my weight, trying to sink myself into the mattress, to smother myself to sleep. But images of Flossie, of the veins on her legs, of her humped back making dents in her bed, kept flashing through my mind and I would get up, pace the floor, open the blinds and then try to sleep again. Some time after two I gave up, dressed, and, with the sound of I-am-leaving in my throat, took my aunt's Buick and drove to the freeway.

For hours I drove along the coast. The interstate was full of cars, and I do not mean station wagons with mothers and fathers and sleeping children come all the way from Canada or Illinois, or truck drivers

or fat, low-bellied sports cars moving eighty in the east lanes. No. I mean cars marked with California license plates, unhurried cars with only the drivers in them, right hand on the steering wheel, left elbow out the rolled-down window, driving easy.

They were doing just what I was doing. We were possessed, it occurred to me. All of us. Insomniacs, having been lured out of comfortable beds and deep sleeps by something restless on our minds. We had come to the West Coast of the country and there was nothing left for us but a place in this constellation of car lights, converging on the freeways to pulse secretly up and down the California coast.

Sometime in the eerie, iron-skull hour before dawn, a car passed me, gradually, deliberately, and I caught the gaze of its lone driver. He was a young man with shadowy eyes. His look, leering and yet passive, defined me as his comrade. It was the gesture of a man coarsely slapping backs with his accomplice: "We're in this thing together. . . ."

And at that instant, following the signs back to San Diego, faster, faster, I wished to have no part in it at all.

M. E. BRADFORD

Arden up the Brazos: John Graves and the Uses of Pastoral

GOODBYE TO A RIVER now owns a name as a minor classic. The book was most favorably reviewed at publication and has since drawn respectful nods on all the regular and appropriate occasions. The manner in which it acquired this good repute has been, however, unfortunate. Well meant comparison to other Southwestern literature has obscured its stature. Graves's obvious (and distracting) abilities as a naturalist have much misled; a plentitude of "lore" combined with the sustaining power of a graceful narrative presence has inspired pious but uncritical enthusiasms. Furthermore, the work on first reading appears to be no more than a combination of mere travelogue and reminiscence, a rustic "jaunt" heightened and punctuated by a few "tall tales." But that seeming is not confirmed by the evidence of design. Neither novel nor memoir, the volume is (as Graves announces in an opening note) a thing made: a conscious creation structured to serve its own ends, taking considerable liberties with the biographical and historic experience out of which it is compounded. All of which is to say that formal explication is in order. And, in addition, woven into the fable of

Goodbye to a River, by John Graves. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. $5.95. Also available in paperback from Ballantine Books. $1.25. All page numbers in the text refer to the hardbound edition.

Goodbye to a River is an even stronger, extrinsic argument for a reading. I so insist because I believe that, by rendering as art the division of intent or purpose which shaped the record of the inhabitants belonging to its scene, Graves sets his readers before the pivot upon which the life of Texas and the Southwest has turned. To rephrase myself, Graves's epiphanies are not *just* his own.

The classification of *Goodbye to a River* is, as my title implies, pastoral: *hard* pastoral (*vide* Burns, Wordsworth, Faulkner, and Frost) to be sure, but still pastoral. The movement is from a settled society to a "green world" and then back to the place of its beginning: from a "made" world to a "given" creation and thence to a double identity derived from both; from metropolitan Fort Worth, west and south to the Brazos River valley, down the river in a small boat, and thence (burdened with God's plenty of food for thought) once again to freeways, apartment dwellers, and air conditioning. The object of Graves's persona/speaker is both tribute and self-restoration. *That* and also *what* he speaks serve as evidence of success on both counts. The one accomplishment makes possible the other.

The metaphor of the journey always at the heart of pastoral animates every feature of Graves's book. Each character introduced in its course stands in some relation thereto, either as negative or as positive foil pointing back to the archetype. The reason for this visit to the Brazos Bottom is, as I just indicated, twofold: the river and its environs are soon to be changed by a series of high dams, and the narrator wants to see the territory once more as he remembered it from his boyhood; but the speaker has also other motives coming from the calendar of his own life, his long absence from the "homeland" and his need for regular escapes from the urban/industrial "other" or "outland" of his maturity. *For* the Brazos (the human characteristics it once encouraged and reflected) and likewise *for* the Graves present to us in this "narrative," it goes therefore out and back and (by implication) forward: goes all of these ways while looking closely *down* into a reflecting self. There alone these trips are one. Almost native upbringing and adult removal secure for this unifying point of observation the balance of distance and involvement necessary to their functional conjunction in art.

In the opening chapters of *Goodbye to a River* there are few of the semi-autonomous stories or interludes with river folk which are numerous in its later pages. By reason of their scene, the Brazos country in the Cross-Timbers well to the west of Tarrant County, this simplicity is to be expected. For that is a deserted region. Yet the arrangement also agrees with the structural economy of Graves's composition. In these pages setting, speaker, *and also the quality of their interdependence* are thoroughly introduced. Here, in addition, we discover theme, the importance (and difficulty) of a vigorous individualism to a life of any merit. As soon as sounded, it is established. Thereafter comes much orchestration but no new song. Even the season fits. Autumn comes before ending and belongs to solitude. It invites repose but not mere rest. For in hard pastoral Arcadia is mortal, winter waits offstage. The proper preparation for its advent is what Graves speaks of as "toughening."

Mass man is the antagonist here, the antithesis of the speaker and most of his companions along the Brazos, living and dead. The narrator is lifted by his exhilarating retreat into the canyons of the hill country: lifted but never inflated. Small humiliations put him in his "place," drive him back into his "definition" as man. The result of this season in the wilderness resembles Faulkner's equipoise of "pride and humility." It is the moderate but self-sufficient *élan* that carried forward all those who belonged to the Brazos, the seedbed of old Texas and mother country to a lot of the Southwest. Attached to the place is a litany of formidable names, of tall men and women whose figures remain undiminished by the particular qualifying vices Graves reports of them: Santanta and White Bear, Colonel Charlie Goodnight, Mrs. Sherman, the Weatherford merchant, Old Man Willett, the Mitchells of Granbury, Big Foot Wallace, Ma Rippy, the Birdsongs and the cantankerous Sam Sowell of the cedar brakes, the McKee tribe (especially their fine women), and an assortment of nameless hermits and pioneers and feuders. The upcountry and more gentle Southerners who migrated to the Brazos in the period from 1845 to 1880 did not come there in search of hardship or battle with the elements, the Comanche, and each other. Their desire was to locate the blood in the best Arden they could find, to have and to hold

a territory utterly their own, there taking "no crap from nobody nowheres no more" (p. 199). But in making room for themselves in the face of such impediments the settlers acquired a substantial character, a toughness without and within. That character owed something to who they were in blood and memory, but was heightened by climate, landscape, and the aborigine. Assuredly it is affirmed through the central action of this book and also in the memorial elements which break that action at well chosen intervals. Graves gives all the advantage to old times, disarming anticipated objections by talk of the private resources behind his partisan attitude and by rhetorical concessions to fact and necessity. In this work he is, perhaps despite himself, the sly and self-effacing archaist. Which brings me to another formal distinction.

While observing an antique excellence and attempting to embody it, Graves sets in motion what Paul Fussell has well called "elegiac action." An affirmative reminiscence—indeed any reminiscence not pointedly negative—*is* an injunction to reconstitute, an appeal to the spirit of Reaction. Graves does in some measure hedge this thrust of *Goodbye to a River*. But the purchase of his argument against the people who are "nobody no where" is all the greater for a little half-denial and understatement. And of course the transformation bemoaned is, in effect, arrested in the making of an elegiac book: a book *through* the gathering of memory into myth and *around* a set of stones and trees and hills and waters. The archaic gesture informing the work reinforces the effect of the side narratives that punctuate it and fulfills the promise of the epigraph from Yeats with which Graves announces his "histories"—a mythology that "marries [men] to rock and hill," thus creating a "race."

Graves stands slightly to the side of his subject in more than authorial distance. For one thing, his family does not fully *belong* to the Brazos country. Some of their roots are in South Texas—a heterogeneous place, easily related to a "scaffolding of thought" such as he acquired. These alien influences had been with Graves even in boyhood. Furthermore, there is a touch of quietism or lassitude in his sensibility. And both attitudes are rare among the Brazos folk. Therefore this poet can salute xenophobia, exclusiveness, and an Antean intimacy with place

without forfeiting his hold on an audience in which there are (he rightly assumes) few who appreciate such postures. Moderate self-removal lends personal authority and therefore dramatic force. Graves has come to love the Brazos after seeing the rest of the world and *without* being tolled along by the ordinary forces of inheritance and prescription which unconsciously bind a man to his *own* place.

Another limitation on this elegiac assertion is similarly functional. As I noted in the conclusion of the opening paragraph of this essay, Graves is aware of the self-destructive potential in the Brazos individualism, even in the moments when he is most thoroughly caught up in admiring that stance. There was a trouble proceeding from this "crossing" of place and people: a disposition to overdo the subduing of a given world which was carried forward by inertia into generations confronting lesser antagonists. And though no old-fashioned Texan ever expected anything connected with the Brazos to be tamed or neutered, they wrought better than they knew. Hence the contradiction between hieratic or comic tone in Graves's remarks on what he admits was a "rape" and the concomitant note of uneasiness with recent phases of the same undertaking: honor for the courage and character required by the enterprise undercut by fear of its ultimate results. As this author recognizes, the Southwesterner has a difficulty in withholding his hand from any challenge. And where there is no fight, he will make one up. Of course, in consequence, the breed runs a risk of fracturing the crucible of conditions which presided over its nativity in the first place.

Two tales of Brazos stubbornness make unmistakable how far the admiration of independence goes: of a mountain man who shot up a county because a sheriff and his friends "teased on him" a bit too much; and of Sam Sowell who wouldn't let his neighbors kill a diamondback because the old curmudgeon admired the snake for first warning and then standing its ground.

That the hardness of living on and through the Brazos country is accountable for the excellence of its human product Graves spells out plainly. To quote one of his choric figures, the hard-bitten, Bible-quoting, and benignly racist widower/solitary, Mr. Willett:

> "A man needs it hard. . . . He'd ought to have it hard

> a-growin' up, and hard a'learning his work, and hard a-gittin' a wife and feedin' his kids and gittin' rich, if he's gonna git rich, all of it. . . . [Then he not only appreciates it better but also] *does* it better."

A hard place worked over joyously but still left hard for the next fellow, that and a reciprocal sharpening of the mettle by context and creature. The image recalls the Augustinian or Fundamentalist notion of this world as a purgatory, a proving ground of souls, where the impurities are burned away as in a great blast furnace. Graves rejoices in what his river weeks do for the "fat" of body and soul. He bows graciously toward Thoreau in this connection (but nevertheless keeps his distance). With Rousseau he has no commerce whatsoever. No one is in this book imagined as potentially righteous by social engineering. Even so, *Goodbye to a River* is suffused with a reverence for the unimproved, all-and-self-sustaining mother—the referent in Satank's death song and in the telling quotation from Deuteronomy:

> "Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit wherein I dwell; for I, the Lord, dwell among the children of Israel."

The commandment of stewardship is not neglected; and its guarantor with real Brazos people is sufficient, an inside *knowing* of "dirt and rain and heat and what they spawn." In *Goodbye to a River* we are informed of how and where it survives. And then we are warned that when it is gone "we will be nearly finished."

Both the shape and the indigenous Brazos origins of this foreshadowed ruin are visible all along the river as the observing "visitor" travels down one hundred miles of its upper reaches: in the elderly people whose children are moved away, in the empty houses, and in depleted, abandoned lands. And they are also present in the narrator's continuous comparisons of the new suburbanite, tall-tower, and factory-working breed in their rabbit hutch brick bungalows (displaying patio behind and Thunderbird in front) with their immoderate, seemingly angry, progenitors. Looming still further in the background are the professional men, industrialists, and oil barons who play games with bought-up homesteads—plus the bureaucrats whose sport is the exercise

of power in the public's name. In a comic and penultimate moment, Graves summarizes a dimension of human history as enacted in a Texas microcosm. Ascending from the river on his last day on the water, the narrator encounters an "ugly bloated man," the operator of a minnow stand, who mumbles of buried Indian gold to be drowned in the valley below, who pulls the voyager aside to view scratches on old trees (supposedly a treasure map), and who then murmurs of another fortune that dam and lake-to-be will provide now that he has forsworn the modest and temporary self-transcendence of whiskey. Out of foolish expectations man continues to make ruin.

However, despite these omens, Graves concludes his fine work as pastoral must end, on a note of hope. Perspective has been recovered and also shared: *brought back* and presented from the rustic reference point, as the mode requires. There is more than melancholy wisdom *in* the book *because* the voice of its maker who appears there is able to finish the immemorial pattern with both a sense of relief at having paid his respects to an old friend and a strong sense of something accomplished. And more importantly, he dramatizes that accomplishment (as in lyric, and with authority not possible in impersonal, elegiac narrative). Pastoral is not written by the residents of Arden. Its benison is for the deracinated exiles who know better. Graves is one of these. And whatever satellites may wheel overhead or however many Fort Worth matrons may puzzle at so much "aloneness on purpose," history and nature (when searched) will still keep their promise to the by-earth-and-history-made creatures who have them for inheritance and conscience. And that is enough for any man to go on.

GEORGE CORE

An Old Man Mad about Writing

THAT IS HOW Ford Madox Ford perfectly described himself in his last years, and the degree of his commitment to the profession of letters is witnessed in the fact that he had called himself "a man a little mad about good writing" before World War I. As the years passed the commitment became more profound even though his luck grew steadily worse. As J. A. Bryant, Jr., wrote at the beginning of the Ford revival, "While he was alive, Ford's career seemed unlikely ever to be regarded as a fulfillment of any kind. His one or two signal achievements passed unnoticed in a succession of near misses and failures; the facts of his life dissolved and reformed themselves in the flood of inchoate poetry that he managed to add just about every time he opened his mouth in public." This is the image which remains with the reader when he has finished Arthur Mizener's biography *The Saddest Story*. Now that Mizener has sorted out the facts and established them in the context of Ford's fictions—both in life and in letters—it is possible to get the man in something like the proper perspective. But there remains an element of fantasy—the continuing paradox that William Carlos Williams caught in his memorial poem: Ford was a heavenly

The Saddest Story: A Biography of Ford Madox Ford, by Arthur Mizener. New York: World Publishing Co. $20. *Your Mirror to My Times: The Selected Autobiographies and Impressions of Ford Madox Ford*, edited by Michael Killigrew. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. $10. *The Alien Protagonist of Ford Madox Ford*, by H. Robert Huntley. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. $7.50.

man but not a saintly one. An unworldly sybarite who loved the world's pleasures but sought release from them. The release was granted only through his art, and then fitfully, even though he wrote regularly all his mature life and was never a hack.

In a few sentences how can one catalogue the long list of contradictions, reverses, and defeats that made up Ford's several lifetimes, as Caroline Gordon has called his long career? One is confronted by the matter of his private life which included one "regular" instance of matrimony and three irregular marriages, by his years in the British army in the First World War as an ancient company grade officer, by the neurasthenia and bad lungs which followed, by his numerous moves from England to the continent to the United States which indicate the insecurity and instability of his nomadic life after 1918. The rows with publishers and the less obvious but more damaging wounds inflicted by fellow authors (especially Conrad and his fierce wife) connect the private life to the public one—the uncertain reputation, the fluctuating sales, the many guises and disguises which were thrust upon him or which he assumed. For the last several decades of his life Ford could have properly been deemed a distinguished writer, but he was generally thought of as liar, *poseur*, cad, and hack, when he was not ignored. This was especially true in England where his staunchest supporter, Graham Greene, has been forced to admit wryly that with Ford "it is never possible to say where history ends and the hilarious imagination begins."

Arthur Mizener tells this pathetic tale in a biography which runs to nearly 200,000 words, and to it he adds a long appendix evaluating those novels not considered in the text and presents the valuable bibliographical material in extensive endnotes. The facts are here, and I doubt very seriously that anyone will have to do this job again. That is in itself a considerable accomplishment. The scholarship is broad and deep, and the criticism of Ford's vast output (mainly of the novels) is sound if lacking in verve. The dazzling array of figures who move in and out of these pages is also handled well, and there are impressive sequences in the description of Ford's relation with Conrad, his brilliant editing and incredible mismanagement of the *English Review* and the

transatlantic review, and his last years in this country. But a vital dimension is missing, as Eudora Welty complained in her long review in the *New York Times Book Review* (May 2, 1971). She called it imagination; I would modify that to read imaginative sympathy.

For reasons which are mysterious Mizener never really gets under the skin of his subject and into his psyche. This quality of interior projection is what is most valuable and enduring about *The Far Side of Paradise*, the author's superb biography of Scott Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald is a good deal less sympathetic a person and writer than Ford: there was a quality of perpetual adolescence about him, and he was a spendthrift with his money and his talent. Ford's vices were considerably less selfish and more reasonable: they boiled down to his propensity to spin tall tales about himself and to his bizarre (but generally loyal) behavior toward women. Despite this, Mizener somehow never comes to terms with the essential man: he can only point to recurrent patterns in the life and forlornly reflect upon them at a distance: Ford "wanted to be both a great writer and a famous man, but he was so outraged by the world's indifference to what he thought it ought to be that he could not—though he tried—effectively accept what it was. It is sad that a man who so longed to have it both ways at once was temperamentally incapable of having it either."

This book will doubtless remain the single standard work for many years, and for purposes of incidental reference it is excellent, but as a narrative *The Saddest Story* leaves something to be desired since the proportions and pace are ill-suited and because the prose lacks the elasticity and vigor to carry the reader gracefully on this long journey. For these and other reasons one should not ignore Douglas Goldring's memoirs, Frank MacShane's splendid critical biography, and Ford's inimitable autobiographies.

Michael Killigrew's experience as a trade editor has been put to good effect in *Your Mirror to My Times*. He also understands Ford well—who, as he says, "existed somewhere behind the extravagantly dramatized personalities of the last Pre-Raphaelite, the Tory English gentleman, the simple kitchen gardener or the literary pundit, the

benevolent, omniscient headmaster of a whole school of writers in Paris and New York."

What Killigrew has skillfully presented is an autobiography of Ford which is drawn chiefly from *Return to Yesterday* and *It Was the Nightingale.* Also included is material from other memoirs and criticism, and thus a large chunk of material that is mostly out of print is made available. Some scholars will question Killigrew's procedure of splicing together several excerpts to make a single selection without showing where the seams are; but as he says, "If the sequence therein is mine, all the words are Ford's own," and undeniably his miscellaneous work lends itself to this kind of treatment. I would have no objection whatever if the editor had dated each selection and provided more precise sources. Moreover, the designer should have given us a full table of contents or shown the titles in the running heads. Despite these deficiencies and the lack of an index, *Your Mirror to My Times* makes a good companion to Ford for the general reader and the specialist alike.

Robert Huntley's study is not only an exploration of the sources of Ford's ideas—the social, historical, and metaphysical attitudes which form one basis of his fiction—but an investigation into the history of ideas in English from 1901 to 1915. Huntley investigates various theories which were prevalent in Ford's early career, especially as reflected in social Darwinianism, the several schools of English history, aestheticism, Nietzsche's overman, and popular notions toward progress and colonialism. He gauges their largely negative effect on Ford and also demonstrates the strong influence of Scott. The illustrative readings of representative novels—especially the Fifth Queen trilogy and *The Good Soldier*—give the argument ballast.

The author shows how Ford was forced to invent his own mythology so that his art could order "the litter and broken bits of a shattered society, the debris and wreckage of Christendom," as a contemporary, John Davidson, put it in 1908. Ford's dilemma and his solution to it thus are characteristic of the same problems which confronted Yeats, Joyce, Pound, Eliot, and others whose major work followed the war. His relative success in constructing a "mundane cosmogony" (or what Huntley calls a private teleology) does not prove him an original thinker;

it does show the sources of Ford's art and indicates how Ford coped with his world in terms of ideas and how those ideas were brought to bear in his fiction. The creation of this mythology, in other words, was nothing "other than the sort of imaginative projection to which the modern artist was of necessity driven." The only weakness in this strategy is that Huntley does not go on to consider the later career, especially *Parade's End*. One should add that the title is not truly indicative of the broad scope of the work.

The Alien Protagonist indicates once again that historical scholarship and literary criticism can be combined in an interesting and readable book. The volume itself is also distinguished by excellent design: the study's clean lines are reflected in its physical shape and in its typography. One yearns to see its elegance in the expensive but poorly designed and badly printed biography World has published.

Throughout his career Ford Madox Ford spoke enthusiastically of the international Republic of Letters, and he always believed that he would assume his rightful place in the "eternity of good letters." That is why he could say that "the only human activity that has always been of extreme importance to the world is imaginative literature," even though he complained of the writer's lot: "Well, God knows what one writes for. But it is certain that one gains neither fame nor money; certainly one does not excite the passion of love, and one's time continues to be singularly unimpressed." There is a sad finality to the prophecy here, for this was written in 1913. Ford had to wait another forty years for true recognition and his proper place in the artifice of eternity. Now that his vindication has come—and arrived too boisterously like the man himself did—one is forcibly struck by the irony and the splendor of his credo: "You must live merrily and trust to good letters."

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   In accordance with the provisions of this statute, I hereby request permission to mail the publication named in Item 1 at the reduced postage rates presently authorized by 39 U. S. C. 3626.
   (Signature and title of editor, publisher, business manager, or owner)
10. FOR COMPLETION BY NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AUTHORIZED TO MAIL AT SPECIAL RATES (*Section 132.122, Postal Manual*). The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes have not changed during preceding 12 months
11. EXTENT AND NATURE OF CIRCULATION

	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	Actual No. of Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
A. TOTAL NO. COPIES PRINTED (*Net Press Run*)	3,150	3,000
B. PAID CIRCULATION		
1. SALES THROUGH DEALERS AND CARRIERS, STREET VENDORS AND COUNTER SALES	428	520
2. MAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS	2,230	2,283
C. TOTAL PAID CIRCULATION	2,658	2,803
D. FREE DISTRIBUTION BY MAIL, CARRIER OR OTHER MEANS		
1. SAMPLES, COMPLIMENTARY, AND OTHER FREE COPIES	300	104
2. COPIES DISTRIBUTED TO NEWS AGENTS, BUT NOT SOLD	93	0
E. TOTAL DISTRIBUTION (*Sum of C and D*)	3,051	2,907
F. OFFICE USE, LEFT-OVER, UNACCOUNTED, SPOILED AFTER PRINTING	99	93
G. TOTAL (*Sum of E & F—should equal net press run shown in A*)	3,150	3,000

I certify that the statements made by me are correct and complete.

(*Signature of Business Manager*)
/s/ Sarah S. East

PS Form 3526 July 1971